


/// Straying away

 amethystcrista.tumblr.com/post/134913217954/the-story-of-vampire-michaela-vol-1-prologue

The Story of Vampire Michaela, Vol 1 - Prologue -

Disclaimer: This light novel is written by Kagami Takaya and illustrated by Yamamoto Yamato. I do not profit from this.

I just wanted to help bring some translation of the new novel so I teamed up with an anonymous translator. Please note that while this is being translated from the original Japanese text, the translator is not a professional so there may be mistakes. Any illustrations included are self provided.

Viewer discretion is advised.

« Owari no Seraph: The Story of Vampire Michaela » Volume 1, Prologue - Creed

This is a story of vengeance.

It goes way back to the genesis of vampires, it's the story of how the angel Michaela fell from heaven into the unsightly earth.

"Ohh, God. God. Give me your blood..."

"..."

Why did it turn out like this?, Mikaela thought.

When he was a child, all he wanted was for his parents to laugh. He was always laughing for this very reason. He was so desperate, it's like he gave it all he had to please them. But even so, they abandoned him.

They were on a highway. Traveling at 100 km, maybe 120 km per hour, that was when his mother opened the sliding door of the minivan and said,

"Go ahead, jump off, Mikaela."

"I, I don't want to..."

"Hurry up."

"I don't want to, mama! P-papa, help me!"

His father sat on the driver's seat as Mika asked him for help. He knew his father wasn't going to help him, though.

These days his father was always drinking, getting drunk. He kept saying "your mom's going crazy because of you" every time he had the chance, then he would hit Mikaela. Wishing that hand would stop hitting him, he told his father that he loved him every day. "I love you, papa." But even so, his father didn't stop. With a sad look on his face, he would hit him.

Apparently his mother was into some kind of religion. He didn't really know what 'religion' was at that time because he was only five, but in retrospect, it was probably something religious.

His mother would come and go to a "church" every day. Then she started going to strange meetings. He thinks it was around that time that his father started drinking. Wasn't the cause of all of this somewhere in that religion, then?

Inside the car at 120 km per hour. With the door opened, his mother smiled gently at him with her beautiful face, then said,

“Come on, Mikaela. Jump.”

“No. I don’t want to.”

“It will be all right. You are a chosen child, after all.”

“Please, mama. I...I’ll be a good boy!”

“You are a good boy.”

“Then I’ll be even better! I’ll make you and papa happy!”, Mikaela shouted as he cried. Even so, his mother grabbed his arm.

“If you want to make us happy, then jump. Right here, right now, jump off this car.”

“Mama, mama!”

“You don’t have to worry. You’re special. You’re a chosen child. And you carry the name Michaela, no matter what. Now go!”

“Mama! Mama! Don’t...Don’t abandon me!”

He clung to his mother but she pushed him away, strongly, as she said,

“I love you, Mikaela.”

He was thrown out of the car. At that moment, it was like he was seeing everything in slow-motion. The gray road flowing at a frightening speed. The clear sky with no traces of clouds. Then they moved around one after the other, his field of vision going in circles.

He was probably going to die. But that didn’t matter anymore. Because knowing that he was abandoned by his parents already carved a deep enough wound on his heart. He was thrown away. He wasn’t needed. He fell on his head. His neck snapped. He felt his right arm and left leg breaking. His organs were smashed against the asphalt and he felt intense pain from his belly. His body was completely wrecked. And yet.

“...”

And yet, somehow, he was still conscious.

He watched as he saw the car his inebriated father was driving -the same one he was riding together with his parents just a moment ago-, meander, collide with a car next to it, then overturning. Then he also saw a truck ram into it. After that, car after car crashed into each other, the car of his parents caught on fire, then a big explosion happened. Mika watched the whole thing in a daze, as he lay collapsed on the ground.

He couldn’t stand up. His body wouldn’t move the way he wanted it to. The only thing that was clear to him was that, if he was inside that car, he would definitely be dead. But he survived. Was he lucky or unfortunate? Even now, he doesn’t know the answer.

Why did it turn out like this?

Why did something like this happen?

Several years later—

The world was destroyed by a virus. Children were caught by vampires and were crammed in together deep down

below surface. But even so, even now, he still remembers the last words his mother told him.

“You don’t have to worry. You’re special. You’re a chosen child. And you carry the name Michaela, no matter what. Now go!”


What on earth did she mean by that? Just what exactly was “Michaela”?

He turned into vampire livestock without knowing the answer.

« **Notes** »

Mikaela and Michaela are written the same way (ミカエラ).

/// Straying away

 amethystcra.tumblr.com/post/135475350034/the-story-of-vampire-michaela-vol-1-chapter-1

The Story of Vampire Michaela, Vol 1 - Chapter 1 - Part 1

Disclaimer: This light novel is written by Kagami Takaya and illustrated by Yamamoto Yamato. I do not profit from this.

I just wanted to help bring some translation of the new novel so I teamed up with the anonymous translator, Fang. Please note that while this is being translated from the original Japanese text, the translator is not a professional so there may be mistakes. Any illustrations included are self provided.

Viewer discretion is advised.

Prologue » [here](#)

« Owari no Seraph: The Story of Vampire Michaela »

Volume 1, Chapter 1 - Yuu and Mika (Part 1)

Just another day for us livestock at the vampire city. Our daily lives is having our blood sucked away.

Hyakuya Mikaela looks at the blood-sucking mechanism and cringes as it pierces through his neck. The stabbing needle caused a slight amount of pain as it started drawing out the blood with a gurgling sound.

“Gh... Ah.”

It was as if his very own life source was being removed from his body. His mind spaced out and his body felt a bit heavy. While fighting that lethargy, Mika called out for the family member by his side that was being forced to donate his blood, as usual.

“Hey, Yuu-chan.”

“...”

“Yuu-chan.”

“Hm?”, Yuu-chan looked this way.

Sitting next to him was a boy the same age as him – only 12 years old. He had disheveled dark hair and a strong will concealed in his black pupils. His name was Yuuichirou.

That reminds me, I don't know his family name.

This was because four years ago, just after Yuu joined the same orphanage he was in, a mysterious virus spread and the world quickly came to an end. Claiming that it was for their own protection, the vampires attacked and captured the surviving orphans, and now the children are being kept in check in this city as if they were livestock. An identification number is used to deal with them ever since. They are nameless livestock.

Looking this way, Yuu-chan said,

“What is it, Mika?”

He answered,

“Yuu-chan, did you ever drink breast milk?”

“Huh?”

“You know, breast milk? They say it’s blood. Did you know that?”

“What? The hell are you talking about, all of a sudden?”

“Babies literally drink their mother’s blood and then grow up. I read about it at the library yesterday.”

“Seriously, what the hell?”

Yuu-chan gave him a confused look.

Mika smiled and continued,

“Oh, you know, I thought this was interesting. Because if all babies are vampires – then humans are actually vampires by nature, so, doesn’t that make all the mothers in the world livestock? That’s what I was thinking. You know, like us.”, he pointed to the blood-sucking mechanism that was stuck in his neck.

Yuu-chan had disgust written all over his face.

“We’re NOT livestock.”

“You’re the only one still being stubborn about that, Yuu-chan. The food they give us looks like scraps and our blood is taken away everyday. We’re livestock no matter how you look at it.”

“I’m NOT livestock. I’m gonna beat up those vampires one day...”

“And get out of here?”

Yuu-chan stopped talking after hearing that question. He looked a bit troubled. Even he knew they could no longer leave this place. A virus spread on the world’s surface. They said that same virus killed everyone older than 13. To make things worse, they were both 12 years old already. Even if they got out, they would only be able to live for one more year. Their only option was to live here like this, as livestock.

In here, forever...

But then, as blood was being sucked out of his neck, Yuu-chan said,

“That’s why I’ve got to become stronger and get rid of those vampires!”

“That’s impossible. I’ve told you this a hundred times already, but vampires are seven times stronger than hu...”

“It doesn’t matter! I’ll do it! I’ll definitely do it! Because if I don’t...”, Yuu-chan said.

Somehow, Mika already knew what he was going to say next.

If he didn’t, wouldn’t the lives of the orphans that escaped together with them be in vain...?

Yuu-chan is kind. Maybe even more than anyone else is. That’s why he can only think about the children or his friends. Even though he’s still a child himself, he doesn’t let the other kids lose their hope. So that their hearts wouldn’t be broken in such a wretched environment, he is always, frantically, talking about his dreams, about how someday they would defeat those freaking vampires.

And so, Mika said,

“Hahaha, so, you’re going to kill every single vampire and then build The Empire of Yuu-chan in here. Is that it?”

“Hey, now you’re making fun of me!”

Mika laughed at that, but then he stretched out his hand and touched Yuu-chan’s hand, gently.

"I'm not... I believe you."

Yuu-chan looked this way. Then he frowned in embarrassment a little.

"..."

He didn't say anything else.

The two of them already knew they felt the same way. They have been together in here for four years now. Four years ever since the world fell into ruin. The two of them, the oldest among the orphans, have been desperately walking down this road for four years, carrying the lives of the surviving children on their backs. This is why they can tell what each other is thinking even without saying a word.

How can we get out of this situation?

How can we show the children a future again?

How. How?

"..."

Lately, Mika could only think about that as well. Yuu-chan seems to think that they can figure something out after they kill the vampires, but he doesn't think that's possible. This is the world of vampires. They're livestock here, the vampires are absolutely dominant. However, if they seriously wanted to do something about this messed up situation, they needed to know more about them. He even thought he should look into ways of gaining their favor, if necessary. Then finally, he stumbled upon something that looked like a breakthrough.

"...Ferid Bathory."

He tried muttering the vampire name, quietly.

A Seventh Progenitor. A Noble with distinct power and influence, even among vampires. And according to the rumor that Mika heard, human children were frequent visitors at this Noble's residence.

Unlike the other vampires, this one was interested in humans. According to the information he got from the other groups of kids, sometimes, he would assist them in order to improve their way of living.

In that case, I will also...

As the blood donation time was over, Mika and the others exited the facility.

In this underground vampire city, there was no sky. Only a tall ceiling. For these past four years they were always looking up at that ceiling, it felt suffocating.

"..."

With his eyes up on that surface, Mika was once again lost in thought, resuming where he was just a few moments ago.

"Hey, Mika."

"..."

"Mika!"

"Oh. Yeah?"

"What's wrong? You're spacing out.", Yuu-chan said from the side.

He smiled a little at that and answered,

"I get tired whenever they take my blood."

"I know, right?! That's why we HAVE to hurry up and destroy those damn vampires!"

As Mika put on a tired look, Yuu-chan started talking about how he was going to kick some vampire asses right that instant.

And then,

“By the way, I know you’re lying. You looked worried. If there’s something wrong, you need to tell me. Don’t carry that weight on your own.”, he ended up saying something unexpectedly sharp.

But he couldn’t get him involved in what he was planning. One wrong move could get them killed. If both him and Yuu-chan died right now, there would be no one left to protect the children.

Laughing, Mika changed the subject.

“Nah, it’s nothing to be worried about.”

“What is it?”

“Well, I was thinking that I never got to hear your last name.”

“Huh?”

“It just hit me while they were extracting our blood. I don’t know your family name, Yuu-chan.”

“My family name?”

“Yup. Didn’t the world end just after you came to the orphanage?”

“Yeah, that’s right.”

“I think that’s why I never got to hear it. So, Yuu-chan, what’s your last name?”, I asked, but well, it’s not like it would really matter now. Our parents are dead. The adults were infected by the virus and died. Then came this world, a world where surnames or anything like that aren’t needed. Besides, Yuu-chan said his parents used to call him a devil and tried to kill him, then they ended up killing themselves. Maybe he won’t like being asked about a name that reminds him of them, he thought to himself.

He remembered how offended he would get whenever someone asked anything that had to do his parents some years ago. He would say, “My parents called me a monster, they said I was the devil and almost killed me! This world doesn’t need someone like me!”, then he would stay quiet for a while.

But right now...

“...My family name. Family name, huh.”

Having spent these four years together, Yuu-chan would no longer be mad at it. After making a somewhat visible effort to try to remember, he said,

“To tell you the truth, I don’t really remember that much. I do remember my parents calling me a monster, though.”

“You don’t remember your name?”

“Nope. By the way, what about you?”

“Hm?”

“You’re obviously not Japanese. I mean, your hair is blond.”

“Oh. Yeah.”

“Are you from another country?”

“My mother was Japanese.”

“Meaning, your father wasn’t?”

“Hmmm. I think he was from Russia or something.”

“You’re Russian~?!”

“I just told you my mother was Japanese. Well, they’re both dead, anyway.”, Mika laughed.

Yuu-chan looked at him a little worried.

“Bad memories?”

“I wonder.”

“Do you remember your family name?”

“It was Shindou, if I remember correctly.”

“Oh, you have a Japanese surname. Then why do you call yourself Hyakuya Mikaela? You already have a name.”

Mika laughed at that as he said,

“Geez~ Didn’t Akane and I have this conversation with you countless times already...?”

Disgust was written all over Yuu-chan’s face, yet again.

“Ohh yeah, okay, okay. It’s because ‘everyone at the Hyakuya orphanage is a family’, right?”

“That’s ri~ght. That’s why you’re also Hyakuya Yuuichirou, Yuu-chan.”

“Why do I have to be a Hyakuya...”

“Like I said, because we’re a family.”

“I told you before, I don’t have a famil...”

“No, no, no, it’s too late now. You’re already part of our family. Not to mention, you already think of us as your family, Yuu-chan~”



"I DON'T."

"You do."

"I'm telling you, I don't!"

"And I'm telling you, you do~"

"Gah, you're so annoying. First of all, I only spent a day at the Hyakuya orphanage. I'm different from you guys. I..."

After that came his usual speech.

"I was called a devil by my parents and they almost killed me, this world doesn't need me!"

They were the same as far as that was concerned. He was thrown out of a car.

The reason for that was,

"You carry the name Michaela. You are a chosen child."

But even now he didn't know what that meant, at all. He did look it up later. Apparently, Michaela is a girl's name. It's a variant of the name of the Angel Michael in feminine form. But that was all he knew. He didn't know what kind of meaning that name had associated with it. In fact, it's possible it didn't mean anything at all. His mother was completely out of herself, maybe she was so deep into some kind of delusion that she ended up saying that.

But his mother was no more. She was caught in the explosion and died. No, actually, he didn't know that, but even if she miraculously had survived, she would have died because of the virus. His friends of the Hyakuya orphanage were his only family now.

"Hey, Yuu-chan. We're family no matter what you say."

"..."

Yuu-chan looked somewhat embarrassed and aggravated at the same time, he ended up turning his face away.

But I know he's kind. He looks after the children, so much that everyone is dependent on him now. That's why I have to be the only one establishing contact with the vampire Noble, Mika thought.

He stopped walking. One should be able to see the mansion where Ferid Bathory lived in from here.

He turned his eyes that way,

"Oh, sorry Yuu-chan."

"Hm?"

"There's something I have to do."

"Something? What?"

"Yeah. I heard that Sakuma's group will be distributing food, I'm going to get some."

Sakuma's group was a group of boys a bit older than them. Sakuma was their leader. Because the Hyakuya children were very young, those boys tried to steal their food rations, so Yuu-chan got into a fight with them. Mika got between the two of them, though, and now they are in good terms, somehow.

"Then, I'll go with...", Yuu-chan was about to say, but Mika didn't let him.

"Yuu-chan, you got into a fight with Sakuma-kun just the other day..."

"Well, that's true, but... That was his fault!"

"There we go again, hostile as ever. Anyway, I got this. You head back, the kids are waiting."

"Are you going to be all right by yourself? Those guys are..."

"Yep, I'll be fine. I'm not Yuu-chan, you see."

"Wha...? What's that supposed to mean..."

"Hahaha. Okay, Yuu-chan, take care of the kids. I'll be right back.", or so he said, but that was a lie. He wasn't really going to where Sakuma's group was. He was going to make contact with the vampire Noble – Ferid Bathory. Mika raised his head once again and looked up in the direction of the mansion where Ferid lived.

-End Part 1-



Let's get this party started, shall we?;) I was only going to translate Crowley-relevant parts, but well, the entire novel turned out to be Crowley-relevant, and it just so happened that this part directly follows the part that has already been translated [here](#), and so with this, chapter 1 is essentially complete.

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela by *Kagami Takaya*

Chapter 1 (closing part) (volume 1, pages 35-47)

◆◆◆◆

The vampire world was a terribly boring place.

For centuries, for millennia, nothing changed. The same vampires, in the same old place, just continuing to exist, forever unchanging.

“ ... ”

In that terribly boring world, today, again, Ferid Bathory was reading a book in silence.

This was a library that was open to human children. It was Ferid himself who made the necessary arrangements to allow human kids entry here.

Watching them was fun. Within them, the spark of life flashed exceptionally brightly, perhaps because they were so much more frail than vampires and their life span was so short.

Besides, reading books made them smarter, and when he watched as they, having found something that appeared like hope to them, tried to develop further, for one reason or another he felt a strange shudder running up his spine.

That was why Ferid decided to grant children access to this library.

That was the right decision, he thought.

He also let the children manage book lending, but ordered for enough control to be in place to know what child read what book.

What books children read was also of interest to him.

He found great amusement in learning what direction the desires of these still very young children took.

For instance, a certain child researched all they could about females. So readily compliant to the human lust.

Alternatively, another child seemed to read up on how to get stronger. Perhaps in order to win in a fight with other children. Or maybe in order to escape from this world after getting strong enough. Though it was probably the former. What that kid researched wasn't the sort that could inflict any damage to a vampire. Ferid also got a report that the child in question beat another child to death. But no one was going to punish him. To vampires, livestock internal fights were not something they cared about any.

In any case, humans' pursuit of knowledge was always driven by some kind of desire, be it the desire to get stronger and make another submit to them, carnal lust, hunger, or the longing for approval and acknowledgement.

“ ... ”

All of those, however, were something that Ferid himself had lost long ago.

Vampires hardly had any desires to speak of. In exchange for gaining eternal life, only their lust for blood got blown out of proportion.

“Somehow~, I can't help yearning for that interest in women or in strength~,” Ferid whispered to himself with a flippant laugh.

Even among the vampires, he was a beautiful man, with pale skin and long silver hair. The way he carried himself reeked of pomp and grandeur, perhaps because having taken a liking to dazzling human aristocrats, for a long time - for a really long time - he wandered from place to place, mixing in with the best human society.

He turned a page of the book children read previously and left lying on the desk.

At the moment, there was no one else in the library. When Ferid Bathory was there, children didn't get close to this place. Except for one.

“Ferid-sama,” a voice, belonging to a child, called.

A boy of 15 or 16 was drawing closer, and Ferid looked his way.

He called the boy by the name. “Yeees, Sakuma-kun?”

“Um, I passed along what you said, that if someone wins your favor, they'll be treated specially.”

“To what child did you tell it?”

“To the blond-haired one...”

“Aah, it must be Mikaela-kun~ At long last. And? How did he take it?”

“Favorably. He is going to visit your mansion as early as today, Ferid-sama.”

“Hmm. I see. That is something to be looking forward to then,” Ferid said, not raising his head.

It just so happened that at the moment, he was reading the book that that boy, Mikaela, read. The book was about names, about where many different names of different countries originated from and how their pronunciation and the

way they sounded changed over the course of history. The book told all about that.

It didn't look like a book for children. Which meant the boy was an intelligent one, no doubt. And Ferid liked smart kids.

He opened the book on the entry for "Michaela". The relevant article contained etymology of the name Michaela.

It appeared that that name originated in Christianity and was one of the derivatives from the name of Archangel Michael, along with such names as Michael, Michel and Miguel.

"Say, Sakuma-kun..."

"Yes, sir?"

"Do you know anything about Archangel Michael?"

"Erm, um, that's..."

"In Christianity, it is the name of a famous archangel."

"U-Um, I apologize, but my family were believers of the Buddhist faith..."

"Hmmp. Buddhism, huh. "Form is emptiness", was it?"

"F-Form is... what?"

"Are you really a Buddhist~?"

"W-Well, erm..."

Ferid laughed and gestured to the boy to leave.

Nervousness still clearly visible on his face, Sakuma excused himself, "If you will excuse me, sir!" and left.

The library got empty again. It was an unspoken rule that when Ferid was there, no humans entered it unless specifically invited.

As to vampires, they hardly read books in the first place. None of them had the thirst for new knowledge unless a need arose. They only lusted for blood, to a boring extent.

That was why Ferid didn't expect anyone to trespass on the premises right now, but his senses picked up a faint presence behind him.

"Hm~? Who might it be?" He turned around.

A man of large build, so tall that he had to tilt his head back a little to look at him, was standing in the back of the library.

His hair was red and his face, with chiseled features, held the freshness of youth.

Crowley Eusford. That was the man's name. Not surprisingly, he was a vampire noble, holding the rank of the thirteenth progenitor.

Addressing Ferid, Crowley asked, "Who was that just now?"

"Sakuma-kun."

"That tells me nothing, and that's why I'm asking who he is."

"A believer of the Buddhist faith, according to him."

"What's even that."

"Don't you know about Buddhism?"

Crowley only shrugged his shoulders. "Emptiness is form?" he said, neatly completing the sutra line of "form is emptiness" that Ferid mentioned earlier. So he listened in on Ferid's conversation with Sakuma-kun then.

Ferid gave a laugh at that. "Hey, hey, Sakuma-kun, that will not do for Buddhists to lose out to Christians in erudition like that," he muttered.

Hearing him, Crowley chuckled and remarked, "If anything, it's Christianity that I've forgotten."

Back when he was human, he devotedly believed in the Christian God. And not only believed, but also participated in the Crusades as a Knight Templar, hunting down pagans.

But he had lost God.

And just now, even went as far as reciting Heart Sutra.

"If you recite a prayer of a pagan religion like Buddhism like you just did, won't you get punished by God?" Ferid asked, and Crowley showed a wry smile.

"God doesn't watch over me anyway, so it's OK."

"He doesn't?"

"Of course He doesn't. If He had, then how come I became a vampire?"

"Unlike in my case, in yours your own ways were to blame."

"Huh?" Crowley gave Ferid a shocked look. Then he chuckled again, "Indeed, if I don't mind traveling all the way from Nagoya just because the likes of you called, then I can see how God would be annoyed with these ways of mine."

He came closer as he was saying that, and his eyes landed on the book Ferid was reading. "What are you reading?"
"The Bible."

Crowley peeked at the cover of the book, as if to confirm Ferid's words. "No, you're not. The title says "History of Names".

"Well, that then."

"Does this book have anything interesting?"

But there was nothing interesting written in it. After all, the truth was that the abominable name, "Michaela", didn't originate from the name of Archangel Michael.

Crowley asked, "So, Ferid-kun."

"Hm?"

"Why did you call me?"

"Why was it, again~?"

"How am I supposed to know? Actually, you pull out that line every time you call me. Could you maybe stop with that harassment already?"

"But you get shocked for a moment every time, no?"

"I do, when I think that I just might have come all the way from Nagoya for nothing, because knowing you, it wouldn't be the first time when you actually forgot what business you had with me, or called me here as a way to harass me."

"True."

"Don't give me that. Anyway, this time, you do have a business with me, I hope?"

To that question, Ferid replied, "I do. So, Crowley-kun."

"Yes, what is it?"

"Do you remember the name "Michaela"?"

"Michaela?"

"Uh-huh."



Crowley appeared to be searching his memory for a while, before responding, "I wonder. I feel like I heard it somewhere a very long time ago."

Ferid smiled broadly and gazed at Crowley. Judging by Crowley's face, he didn't seem to remember. And he really probably hadn't. Ferid took steps so that he wouldn't.

Crowley prompted him, "So what about that "Michaela"? Does that have something to do with why you called me?"

Ferid closed the book and put it on the desk. He then recalled when exactly he heard the name Michaela most recently. Yes, that was when...

"Crowley-kun."

"Mn?"

"Tell me about how you became a vampire."

Crowley gave him a puzzled look. "Where did that come from, all of a sudden?"

"Just tell me."

"You know the story very well yourself though, don't you? You were right there at the time, watching me and grinning like an idiot."

That elicited a chuckle from Ferid. "Indeed. That was an amusing sight. That's why I want you to tell me about it again."

Crowley's expression changed, and he now looked like he was trying to recall something - those days. The days when he still was so very sweet and innocently believed in God.

How many years ago was it?

If memory served, it happened in the beginning of the 13th century.



Keep in mind that most names here are French (and one seems to be Hungarian), so they are read according to the rules of the French language, not English. And let me reiterate just for the heck of it: human!Crowley is absolutely fabulous!

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela by *Kagami Takaya*

Chapter 2 (part 1/3) (volume 1, pages 49-71)

The Serial Killer

Europe of the 13th century was a world of God and religion.

Everyone believed in God and thought that they would be granted a happy life if only they prayed to Him.

Crowley Eusford wasn't an exception, being under the impression that following God's will was the way to attain happiness.

But these days, every time he closed his eyes, he always saw the same dream.

The worst nightmare of a dream where he killed and killed and killed people on the battlefield under the banner of God's name; where his comrades kept being atrociously slain; where pagans, with tanned skin and eyes alight with flames of hatred, kept unleashing attacks on him and his comrades.

Ah, ah, there it was again, that dream. As if he was a sinner and God kept showing him that dream every night to punish him. Even though he believed in God so much.

Even though I believe in Him so much...

“ ... ”

But this was where Crowley Eusford woke up from his dream, all because a gritty sound of swords clashing nearby reached his ears.

The same instance, his hand flew for the sword on his belt, before he remembered: ah, he wasn't on the battlefield anymore.

Ever since he had returned from that war, he had become very jumpy like this. Especially he couldn't handle the sound of swords clashing. The moment he heard it, his heart started pounding hard and he was on high alert, ready to fight.

It had been more than a year now since he had last stood on the battlefield, but strangely enough, he still couldn't quite find peace.

Around him, 10 boys fought in pairs with dull bladed training swords. The place was the training grounds for training knight apprentices that Crowley himself made by clearing the yard of his own house. For a while now, teaching swordplay here was what put food on Crowley's table. It was a second practice of the day, and he ended up dozing off in the middle of it.

“That was rude of me.”

With a wry smile, Crowley got up and clapped his hands twice. The apprentices put away their swords in a hurry and lined up in a row in front of Crowley.

“That's it for today. You all got better since our last practice.”

Though he did think how shamelessly false-sounding the line was, the faces of most of the apprentices lit up with joy.

“Thank you for today!”

Only one tall boy sent him a glare. “How could you see any of our progress when you were nodding off, Crowley-sensei?” he said.

Crowley took a closer look at him. The boy was 16 or 17, with a few faded pockmarks on his face, a good body build and a decent amount of muscle. He was probably confident in his strength. In his sword skills, as well, and also, in the influence of his parents.

It was easy to gather that much from the expression on his face.

“What is your name?”

“Josef von Esterházy.”

Esterházy was a rather famous name among nobility. The boy's confidence seemed to stem from being one of them then.

Addressing the son of those esteemed Esterházies Crowley said, “Well then, Josef-kun. How about I apologize for nodding off? How does this sound to you?”

But Josef wasn't satisfied. “No, that's not enough. Sensei, I have yet to see you draw your sword even once.”

At that, Crowley shifted his eyes to look at the sword strapped to his hip. It was a sword of one of his fallen comrades he picked up on that battlefield.

"Yeah, true, that. Because there is no need for it with you yet. In swordsmanship, the beginning is crucial. So first, we build the solid basics—"

But Josef interrupted him mid-sentence. "I've already finished with all the necessary basics. I only came here because I heard that one can learn actual combat from a hero who returned from war."

Actual combat, he said.

Except actual combat wasn't something one could learn living in the peace of a city. Crowley saw that gory battlefield scenery in his mind's eye again.

There you had to charge forth, only forth, even as your comrades' severed hands and feet were thrown in the air, bathing the surroundings in blood.

"...Actual combat, huh." A thin wry smile curved Crowley's lips without his intention, and Josef's face turned red with fury.

"You bastard! What are you laughing at?! That's insulting!"

Crowley didn't rebuff him by pointing out that if someone was being insulting here, it was definitely the boy himself. He didn't if only because the boy was the son of a famous noble family.

Josef, meanwhile, continued, putting a hand on the hilt of the sword on his hip, "Besides, since you never let us see you actually draw your sword, I have to question if you have any confidence in your swordfighting skills at all?"

"..."

"You do meet them sometimes, don't you. Knights who act all high and mighty just because they came back from war. I bet you were just hiding in the rear the whole time, no?"

The other apprentices couldn't keep silent at that. "Hey you, you're being seriously rude here, you know."

Josef, though, paid them no mind as he went on, "In the first place, if your war glory is as great as the rumors make out it to be, then why are you secluding yourself in a place like this?"

Gazing at the pupil who was throwing such words in his face, Crowley simply said, "...If you don't like something, you are free to quit. Well now, like I said, everybody is dismissed for today. And I'm leaving."

Once the words were out of Crowley's mouth, Josef's face twisted into a grimace, like he had just gotten all the confirmation of his suspicions he needed. It was an expression that was saying that he had just exposed Crowley's true colors.

"Hey, don't you run away, you coward. Draw," was the next thing Josef said. He then pulled out his own sword and pointed its tip at Crowley. The motion was exceedingly practiced, and as per basic teachings. So it seemed the boy didn't lie about having finished with the basics. Perhaps his family let their money do the talking, and he had a private tutor to teach him.

But in the end, the boy's sword, turned on him, failed to make Crowley feel anything that resembled fear or intimidation. For it held nothing but pettiness and fragility and couldn't even begin to compare to the pagans' overwhelming hatred that was unleashed against him and his comrades back in the land of Egypt.

The other apprentices were watching Josef and Crowley with bated breath. It looked like he couldn't just brush this thing off anymore without showing something.

"Haa. No choice then," Crowley summed up with a sigh and put his hand on the sword on his hip.

Josef grinned, "I'll expose you for who you really are, you phoney mentor!"

As Josef swung his sword, Crowley took a single step forward with his right foot and unsheathed his sword, hitting Josef's blade with his own. Unable to withstand the force of the impact, Josef's sword got ripped out of his grip and sent sailing into midair.

"Ah..." Josef let out a surprised gasp as Crowley brought his sword down on him from above his head, stopping the blade with precision a hair away from the tip of the boy's nose. The wind the blade created on its downward arc made Josef's neatly cut bangs flutter.

Josef couldn't even move a finger, tiny whimpers being all he could manage, "Ah, ah..."

Gazing with gentleness at his brazen student, Crowley said, "If it was actual combat, you'd be dead. That's why basics are so important. But well, you have the aptitude, so you'll be able to do what I just did in no time."

With that, Crowley slowly sheathed the sword.

Josef weakly sank to the ground right where he stood, managing only to raise his head to look up at Crowley, "S-Sensei!"

Crowley chuckled, "Haha, quiet. For today, dismissed. Come again tomorrow."

The other knight apprentices also answered to that, "Yes, sir!" in voices so loud that it was hard to believe they belonged to the same kids from earlier.

Giving them a wry smile, Crowley sat back down on his chair. This chair was also to blame that he dozed off in the middle of a practice session. Its make was cheap, and it tended to be shaky and rocky. It was that rocking that lulled him to sleep before long. Well, he only ended up seeing the same old bad dream again though.

After saying goodbye to Crowley, the pupils started leaving. Once all of them left the grounds, Crowley, rocking in his chair, raised his eyes up to the sky. It was a very clear day, with fine weather perfectly suitable for taking a nice nap.

Crowley gave a little yawn and closed his eyes.

Would he end up seeing that dream again? He wasn't getting nearly enough sleep lately because of it.

Just then, his hearing registered the sounds of his students making a commotion. He pricked up his ears to listen to what they were saying.

"H-Hey, that person's uniform! He must be a Templar Knight, no?"

"What would a Templar Knight be doing at a training school of an out in the sticks town like this?"

"Hey, better shut up, guys. That person is Gilbert Chartres-sama, and the rumor has it that he's a candidate to be the next Master of the Order," someone said.

At that, the pupils fell silent instantly.

Crowley only inclined his head, not moving otherwise.

Gilbert Chartres. That name brought back memories.

It belonged to a knight who took a path after that war that was different from Crowley's own, choosing to march forward to where power and authority concentrated, rather than to spend his days in a tumbledown house in a town in the middle of nowhere.

Crowley's eyes focused on the young man that appeared on the practice grounds. If he remembered right, the man

was 24 now, a year younger than himself.

He had fine blond hair and sharp blue eyes. A strong will could be felt in the perfect straightness of his back.

Did God still dwell in his heart even after he had gone through that war? Crowley wondered all of a sudden.

Having finished weaving his way through the crowding students, Gilbert was going straight for where Crowley sat. Compared to a year ago, he had gained a more dignified air about him, it appeared.

The pupils were regarding him with eyes full of reverence and respect, so very different from how they usually looked at Crowley.

Indeed, if they had to admire someone, it was better if they admired a man like Gilbert, Crowley thought. After all, Crowley himself had started losing something very important in that war.

“...”

Gilbert stopped in front of the sitting Crowley and addressed him, “It has been a long time, Crowley-sama.”

The students, who watched the scene unfold from a distance, started making a commotion again, making Crowley think that perhaps he needed to start their education from the basics of a knight’s manners and mindset rather than of swordplay.

Looking up at Gilbert, outloud he said, “Drop the ‘-sama’, Gilbert. These days, you’re a much greater man than I am.”

But Gilbert paid his request no mind and continued, “Crowley-sama. Why do you not attend church anymore?”

It looked like he didn’t intent to let up on the formalities anytime soon.

He was always like that, forever uncompromising if he believed that what he was doing was right. But that was the precise reason why he kept believing in God even on that wretched battlefield.

A shadow of worry clouded Gilbert’s expression as he asked, “Ever since that war, you stopped coming to church. Naturally, I know the feeling, too, and I understand it. So many of our comrades fell in that war. It pains our hearts so, and some even lost the most precious thing there is - their faith.”

“...” Yeah, and I’m one of them, Crowley thought to himself. He had started to lose faith, he knew.

“But you are not like that, sir, I am sure. You saved so many of our comrades. Including me, of course. If not for you, I...”

But Crowley interrupted him, “It wasn’t me who saved you. It was God, Gilbert, because He saw how unshakeable your faith was.” A bitter smile threatened to twist his lips at how ridiculous it was that these words came out of the mouth of someone like him - someone who had started to lose his faith in God.

However, to that Gilbert answered, still gazing at him fixedly, “Even if so, it only means that you, another survivor of that war, are also a person chosen by Our Lord.”

“I just got lucky.”

“Crowley-sama.”

“If you have no other business with me, I’ll excuse myself.”

Crowley got up from his broken chair. It rattled again as he did. Its left back leg needed to be reinforced, or the chair would continue to rock, and he would be risking to nod off at an inappropriate time again.

He would fix it later, he decided.

With his back to Gilbert, he was about to walk off when Gilbert remarked, “The Knights Templar are looking for a

knight worthy to become the next Master.”

Now, this seemed to be the business he had with Crowley.

Crowley turned back around, “I heard my pupils say earlier that you’re a Master candidate. Congratulations.” Gilbert gazed at Crowley, “I would like to recommend you for the position. Our comrades all agree with me. If only you attended the assembly...”

But Crowley only shrugged his shoulders. “I’m not worthy.”

“Your achievements in that wretched war shine so bright that it is not an exaggeration to call them uniquely outstanding. Bearing the noble intention to sacrifice yourself for the sake of your comrades in your heart, you saved a great many of them. Risking your life, you slew legions of enemies. I cannot think of anyone who could be worthier than—”

But Crowley laughed at that, “Sacrificing myself, eh. If I’m that great a man as you say, then why didn’t I make good on my self-sacrificing intention and die there? Why am I still living without a care in the world?”

“Because Our Lord had chosen you!”

“Hahaha!” Crowley burst out laughing.

He couldn’t imagine himself as being chosen by Lord no matter how he tried. If anything, what he saw was not God but Devil.

In the battles to take back the Holy Land, he killed and killed pagans, flying justice in the name of God, but in the end, he never caught even a glimpse of Him.

What he did glimpse was Devil.

“ ... ”

For whatever reason, on that battlefield, he ended up seeing a monster that sucked human blood. Although now, more than a year later, and him living every day in peace, it had become impossible to ascertain if what he had seen there was real or a hallucination.

But even if it was just a figment of his imagination, he... there and then, at that place where he needed God, in whom he believed so much, the most, he failed to catch even a glimpse of Him.

That’s why Crowley reiterated, “...In any case, I’m not worthy.”

Gilbert’s next question was cutting, “Then, do you want me to believe that teaching children of nobility swordplay in this backwoods town is what your worth amounts to?”

Crowley tossed a glance at his students, watching the two of them from a distance, and replied, “Unlike me, these kids have a future, and teaching them is an important duty.”

To that, with annoyance coloring his tone, Gilbert objected, “Please do not run away. You have the duty worthy of you to fulfill.”

It was a second time today where he was told not to run away. And almost right after a pupil of his, Josef, threw a “don’t you run away, you coward” line in his face, too.

True, they might have been right, and he might have been running away all this time. From that battlefield. From that nightmare. From the deaths of his comrades.

It was because he kept running away from the weakness of his own heart that he ended up seeing Devil even though the one he sought so desperately was God.

"Crowley-sama. The Knights Templar need you, our hero."

"They just want to use the banner of a hero, no? And I don't feel like meddling in petty politics."

"No, that is not the reason. Your strength is needed to administer justice. For such is the will of Our Lord."

Before he could check himself, Crowley blurted out, "Listen, Gilbert, the name of the Lord is not to be taken in vain like that."

For some reason, Gilbert's face instantly brightened. "I knew that you have not lost your faith, sir."

"..." Crowley frowned. With a little sigh, he touched the rosary on his neck so that Gilbert wouldn't notice. He wondered why he still had it hanging around his neck if he really had lost God.

"Crowley-sama." Gilbert called out to him again, and Crowley raised his head to say, "I need to go."

"Crowley-sama. I shall be coming here every day until you say yes."

"That's a royal bother."

"I will pull you back to the center stage, sir, the same way you saved me back in that war."

Ignoring him, Crowley walked away.



Crowley's house, remade into the training school, was always clean, because once a week, a maidservant came and took care of chores and cleaning.

To begin with, it wasn't in Crowley's nature to leave messes after himself. As to the things to do, he took strolls, read and did some necessary sword training as to not grow rusty. His meals were provided by his neighbors. Soon after he had started living here, he caught 3 burglars that tried to break into the house 3 doors down from his own, and ever since that incident, his neighbors, understanding the tribulations of a man living all alone, took turns preparing meals for him. That is, he was served domestic meals in exchange for this kind of protection.

As such, there was no laundry or dishes to wash, and no need to prepare meals for himself.

All in all, living here was comfortable, and he could spend his days quietly without having to keep up appearances or get dragged into the Knights' internal strifes.

Seated at the dining table, Crowley mulled over what happened today. Over what Gilbert said. Over his intention to recommend Crowley as a candidate for the post of the Master.

He had no idea how it came down to that, but probably due to some political play.

Looking at his qualifications only, recommending Crowley certainly wasn't a bad pick. Among the nobility, the Eusford house he was born into was by no means a low class family.

As a third son, he had no fortune or lands to inherit; that was the precise reason why he took the path of a Knight of God to begin with, in hopes of winning honor in battle, and if he were to become the Master and aim to go even higher, he would need a certain measure of horizontal connections.

That's when the Eusford name would come into picture. If Crowley did choose to become a Master candidate, his father would be pleased, too, no doubt.

After all, currently, the Knights Templar were getting more and more involved in all sorts of complex politics and even were beginning to have a hand in the financial matters.

"..." Crowley started at the cold stew and bread left for him on the simple dining table. It was lunchtime, yet, strangely enough, he had no appetite. Perhaps because he dozed off earlier when he really shouldn't have had. But

if he didn't finish all of the food, the neighboring matron who prepared it would surely get angry with him.

"I should eat then."

He just took bread in hand, when an energetic boyish voice shouted his name in the yard, "Crowley-sama!"

Crowley shifted his eyes to the source of the voice.

"I'm coming in, Crowley-sama!"

With that, the source made it through the door, not waiting for his permission.

It was a cheerful boy of about 15. His stature was small and completely unfit for a knight, but he wore a long light brown robe with a red cross on his chest.

He was Jose, a squire.

Once he had returned from the war, Crowley immediately disbanded the group of knights under his command, but half a year ago, Jose was assigned to him and proved to be a royal pain in the neck because no matter how many times Crowley told him not to come, he would come uninvited every day regardless.

"Crowley-sama! Thank you for supervising today's morning practice sessions!"

In reply to that, Crowley informed him, "Sorry, Jose, not sharing my lunch with you."

"I never expected you to, sir, that's why I have already eaten mine become coming here!"

"And I distinctly remember telling you not to come here anymore."

"Well, I cannot do that, sir. My orders state that I am to follow and serve you, Crowley-sama!"

"Nothing good will come out of being by the side of someone like me."

But for some reason, at that, Jose gave him a proud look. "I am absolutely sure that that is not so! Serving Crowley Eusford-sama, the hero of the Crusades, is a great honor that my humble self does not deserve!" he said with an impossibly bright and sunny smile.

Losing this round, Crowley smiled with a strained smile. "The hero, huh."

He had already heard that earlier today and was frankly fed up with the hero talk for one day.

Not to mention that he didn't consider himself a hero in the first place.

At the very least, for a Knight Templar, to be killed in battle was supposed to be the greatest honor. Surrender was out of question, especially for the higher ranking knights. If so, then just what honor was there for the defeated commander?

Meanwhile Jose continued joyfully, "Today, too, I was asking the other surviving knights about your heroic deeds in the war that they had witnessed! Can I please tell you what they told me?"

"Of course not, do you even need to ask?"

"Please allow me!"

"No. Besides, why should I even listen to the stories about myself from you?"

"Because I thought you might have forgotten!"

"Are you even serious?"

But Jose looked deadly serious. He always gave his utmost effort everything he did. Believing in God from the bottom of his heart, he found hope in the Knights Templar and revered his master, Crowley, endlessly.

All squires in these parts were from non-noble families. Jose was no exception, being from a poor family, as Crowley heard. Having come from the world where the word "honor" didn't exist, he put his life on the line for honor

and pride.

It was kids like him that were dying on that battlefield en masse like flies.

But not once God, in whom those kids with pure hearts believed so much, had smiled at them. Not a single time, not at anyone.

Jose said, "In that case, please allow me to tell you the tale of your heroic deeds at dinner."

"Good grief, go home in the evening at least."

"Speaking of, sir, do you have any plans for the afternoon? Is there something I can help you with?"

"Nothing I would need your help with."

"Then, Crowley-sama, what exactly are you going to do in the afternoon today?"

"Hm~ I was just going to go out and check if anything is disturbing public peace." Because it wouldn't do to keep getting food for doing nothing. "So Jose, call it a day and go home already."

But Jose wasn't about to, firing off with excitement plastered all over his face, "I see! Nothing less from you, Crowley-sama! They say protecting public peace is the most important job of a knight! Please allow me to accompany you!"

So he was going to tag along, huh.

Crowley sighed, "Haa", and his hand made to reach for the rosary on his neck again.

It was the force of habit.

For your heart to be one with God. Always with God.

Before the war, he had no doubt that God lived in his heart, as well...



The murder mystery strikes and human!Crowley meets ~~the king of perverts~~ Ferid.

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela by *Kagami Takaya*

Chapter 2 (part 2/3) (volume 1, pages 71-105)

◆

People on the streets didn't pass him without a greeting.

"Knight-sama."

"Templar-sama."

"Thank you for making rounds."

The one to answer to those greetings was Jose, by throwing out his chest with pride and gazing up at Crowley reverently.

That look was annoying as hell. That's why Crowley, looking down at him, remarked, "You're being pesky, Jose."

"Eh?! But I didn't say anything!"

"The mood you're creating is pesky."

"Eeeeeeh?! Then I apologize!" With this, he fell a step back.

His next comment was made from behind Crowley, "But I have got to say that you are popular as ever, Crowley-sama."

"That's because you're wearing that showy uniform. Normally, not many people call out to me," was Crowley's reply.

Although Crowley always wore a sword, usually his preferred mode of dress didn't make it obvious that he was a

knight. And almost no one felt the need to say anything to him then.

That was how different people's attitude was, depending on whether they saw the uniform or not.

The name of the Knights Templar seemed to be gaining weight by the day.

Jose meanwhile objected, "Excuse me, but these people are not bowing to me who is actually wearing the uniform, but to you, Crowley-sama. It is probably because there is an insurmountable gap in things like stateliness and dignity between us."

"..."

"I pray to God every day to become tall and muscular some day, like you, Crowley-sama."

"Huh? Are you seriously praying for something like that?" Crowley couldn't help blurting out.

Jose took it as a permission to walk by his side again as he replied, "Yes, I am! It is my dream. This morning, I prayed in church to become like you again." He then looked up at Crowley and asked, "Crowley-sama... when do you go to Mass?"

"Me?"

"Yes, sir. Now that I think about it, I have not seen you in church. Could it be that when one becomes a great knight like you, they get to attend Mass at some other special place?"

Crowley touched the rosary on his neck before answering, "I did my lifetime share of praying on that battlefield, so now God is fed up with having to look at my mug."

"On that battlefield... Do you mean when you participated in the Crusades?"

Jose tried to control his voice, but his eyes took on a starry quality that was impossible to miss.

Now that was not a good topic for conversation, Crowley thought.

Jose meanwhile asked his next question, "What did you pray for when you were on the battlefield?"

At that, Crowley tried to recall what it was that he prayed for in that war.

"Well, it wasn't anything noble, just selfish wishes that are embarrassing to voice, like may I live through today or may arrows miss me."

"Lord granted your wished, then! After all, you slew a great many pagans in Egypt and were able to become a hero, Crowley-sama!"

There it was again, the "hero" word. It was like everybody and their mother couldn't live without saying "hero" today.

Crowley replied, "I lost the war though. Maybe because I was too weak... or didn't pray hard enough."

"You are definitely not weak, Crowley-sama! And I am sure that that defeat is a trial sent to you by Our Lord! It is because Lord loves you so much that He wants to grant you the chance to train and grow even more!"

That was a very knight-like view. It might have been better to have Jose train that able pupil of his, Josef.

Crowley chuckled and patted Jose's head. "Good grief. You will certainly make a good knight, Jose."

"R-Really, sir?!"

Crowley laughed seeing Jose blush and beam with happiness at the compliment. Was there a time when he, too, was burning with such passion for ideals? He couldn't remember anymore.

After walking the streets for a while, a crowd, gathered at the entrance to a narrow backalley, came into view. The townsfolk cautiously peered into the alley from a distance.

"Crowley-sama, do you think something happened...?"

"Hm. Let's go check."

"Yes, sir!"

The two of them drew closer. Weaving his way through the crowd, Crowley came to the front of it, directly before the entranceway to the alley.

It was only early afternoon, but that backalley was dark and dirty, with an eerie atmosphere hanging inside, as if a gate to Hell had opened in it.

Behind Crowley, Jose started questioning the gathered bystanders.

"What on earth happened here?"

A middle-aged man responded to him, "Oh, knight-sama. Sorry, but we don't really know ourselves."

"Then why are you crowding the place if you don't know?"

"Ah, well, knight-sama. You had better not go there though. I heard that there is something terrifying in there..."

"Something terrifying? What exactly?"

"A monster. The kind that kills people by sucking their blood out."

"Blood? In other words, a murder took place?"

"That's right, sir."

Jose squeezed through the crowd to stand by Crowley's side. "Looks like a murder, Crowley-sama."

Crowley nodded, then went on straight into the alley.

"Ah, Crowley-sama!"

Jose tried to go after him, but Crowley ordered, "Tell everyone to stay away from this place for a while. I'll go investigate."

"Y-You will?!" a man exclaimed.

Crowley didn't answer.

Jose spoke up in his stead though. "Don't worry and leave it to Crowley Eusford-sama. For you see, Crowley-sama is a Crusa—"

"Jose."

"Erm, ah, yes, sir?"

"Shut up."

"M-My apologies, sir. Anyway, everybody, like I said, leave it to Crowley-sama and stay clear of this place."

But a woman raised an objection. "Knight-sama, it is dangerous to go there alone. That monster has already killed several people."

She was clearly addressing Crowley.

He turned his head to look at her. Unlike the other townspeople, she was scantily dressed. Probably a prostitute. Her clothes left a good measure of her legs and her ample breasts exposed. She was quite pretty. Her skin bore a bronze hue, so it appeared that her lineage had some foreign blood mixed in.

The woman looked to be on the verge of tears as she explained, "It is a monster that only targets and kills women like me. He has already killed many of us."

"If several of you were killed, then why no one is doing anything?"

"Because no one would lift a finger for a few killed prostitutes. But in the last six months, 30 of us were killed by that

Night Fiend.”

So they even gave him a name already - the Night Fiend. Indeed, if someone killed 30 people in a town, they would be dubbed a monster.

Killing people in a town would make one a fiend. But for killing them on the battlefield, one would be hailed a hero.

The woman called out to Crowley again, “That is why going there all alone is—”

But Crowley interrupted her with a smile. “Thanks for the warning.”

“But...”

The woman didn’t give up, and it got Jose mad. “Hey, you, you’re out of line, prostitute! Do you have any idea who this perso—”

“Jose. Do your job,” Crowley cut him off harshly, letting some of the anger be heard in his voice.

“Oh,” Jose gasped, opening and closing his mouth several times like a fish before getting out a stumbling apology and proceeding to clear away the curious onlookers.

Crowley went into the alley.

The moment he entered it, a stench he was very well familiar with from that war assaulted his senses.

The smell of blood and death.

The war scenes got resurrected in his memory again. The scenes of mountains of dead bodies, both of his comrades and of pagans.

“...” Going farther down the alley, he soon found a corpse without looking.

It belonged to a woman, lying prostrate on the ground. Obviously a prostitute. She was naked, and her throat was slashed open. But...

“Why isn’t there more blood?”

On the ground and on the wall next to it, there were traces of blood, probably the splatters from the moment the killer cut the victim’s throat open, but for someone who was murdered by getting their throat slashed open, the leftover amount of blood was nowhere near enough. It wouldn’t be strange to find a puddle of blood on the ground under such circumstances, but there wasn’t any.

Crowley approached the corpse. Grabbing her by the hair, he lifted the victim’s head to take a look at her face. She died with a look of terror twisting her features. No blood dripped from the wound. Too little blood around in general.

“Was her blood drained out somehow?” he murmured to himself quietly.

Letting the woman’s head drop back to the ground, he got up. This woman wasn’t the only victim.

Seven others were pinned to the wall with something like a stake. Legs tied with a rope, seven dead bodies were hanging upside down by the feet.

All had their throats slashed open - in the same way one would let out blood from a hare. Unless something like a keg was specifically put under the bodies to collect the blood, big pools of it would be forming on the ground below, no doubt.

Which meant, the killer did intent to collect the blood and take it with them.

But what for?

When Crowley thought about it, his mind replayed a memory from the war again. The last memory he had, of a devil. The beautiful devil who sucked lifeblood out of his human victim's neck with an enraptured expression on his face.

But that had to be a hallucination. That gory war weakened his heart and God left him, that's why he ended up seeing that illusion.

In reality, no bloodsucking monsters could exist.

"...Still, this is..." Crowley whispered and felt his hand move to reach for the rosary on his neck, as if in search of help, but in that moment, a voice came from behind him.

"Oophew... This smell is awful," Jose said, walking up to Crowley. Raising his eyes to stare at the hanging bodies, he asked, "Just what on earth is this?"

"Corpses, obviously," Crowley answered.

"Yes, I can see that, sir. Agh, good gracious, I cannot stand this stench. I am impressed that you can put up with it so easily, Crowley-sama."

"Stench? Aah... Well, I got used to being around dead bodies, so."

"Is that something one can get used to? That is Crowley-sama for you. I will learn from you, sir."

Crowley had no idea just what was going through Jose's head, but the boy tried to take a deep breath, only to immediately choke on it. Seeing him cough, Crowley ended up letting an unintentional chuckle slip, despite the tragic circumstances.

Jose really was a pure child. Truth be told, Crowley didn't want him to ever set foot on any battlefield. This boy, with his diminutive stature and gentleness, just wasn't made for fighting. If he ever had to head to the frontlines, he would become a bad smelling corpse of a comrade in no time at all.

In battle, God wasn't kind to the weak.

Looking at the suspended dead bodies, Jose asked with a voice full of trepidation, "...Could this be the doing of a witch or something similar?"

Indeed, the crime scene reeked of black magic. Like some ritual of those who worshiped Devil.

Devil... the bloodsucking devil.

"Maybe it'd be better to have the Knights Templar deal with this."

"Should I go report it, sir?"

"Yes, I'll be counting on you for that."

"Of course, sir! I will be right back!" Jose hurried out of the alley.

In the meantime, deciding to check for any leads that might have been left on the scene, Crowley was about to examine the bodies when another voice came from behind him.

"Uwawah, what do we have here? What is this magnificent view~?"

The voice was laughing and strangely flippant.

Did one of the Templar Knights make it here so fast? Though that hardly could be the case, considering that Jose ran out of the alley only a little while ago.

"..." Crowley turned around and found an oddly bewitching man of almost ethereal beauty standing there.

The man had long silver hair and his skin was pale, almost translucent - the kind one could almost see the veins

showing through. The clothes he was clad in also looked expensive and tailor made.

Not even the high ranking knights could afford to wear such clothes. Which meant, the man either belonged to a prosperous merchant family, or...

"...Are you a noble?"

When asked that question, the man gave another laugh and, looking at Crowley, said, "And you must be the killer?"

Not many would have enough presence of mind to be able to joke in a situation like that. After all, this was the place with 8 corpses lying around, and with all the victims killed in a disturbingly creepy way. The putrid corpse smell, hanging in the air, made even Jose, who trained daily to prepare for this kind of scenery, almost puke.

And in a place like that, this man just laughed light-heartedly. That made Crowley's nerves go taut: what if this guy was the killer. As the possibility floated through his mind, the muscles in his right arm tensed, so that he would be ready to draw the sword strapped to his hip any moment.

If the guy was a skilled military man, he should have picked up on that small movement. No, Crowley made sure to make it prominent enough for the other man to take notice.

If the culprit was him, then Crowley would make his head roll and be done with it. Any suspicious twitch from the guy, and Crowley's sword would behead him. Crowley had already visualized the action in his mind.

But the beautiful man in front of him showed no reaction to the tensing of Crowley's muscles.

Defenseless and with his guard seemingly completely down, he shifted his attention to the hanging bodies.

"Well, with your height and thoroughly tempered body, it may be possible for you to hoist the corpses up like that, but for me, it is out of question. Besides, even for you it would be a lot of work to hang all 7. If you were the killer, just how on earth did you do it?" he asked. The words sounded like the man was trying to prove his innocence.

And he was right: the task looked pretty impossible to accomplish all alone. Even if one managed to, it would take a considerable amount of time, and the man, with the stature and body built he had, didn't look up to it.

It wasn't like his height was on the short side, but he was thin and didn't appear to have undergone any sort of physical training.

Crowley relaxed and said, "If I were the killer, you would be dead already."

"Then who are you?"

"A knight. A Templar Knight. My name is Crowley Eusford."

As Crowley introduced himself, the man raised his gaze at him and slowly looked him over with appraising eyes, for some reason happily, then said, "Crowley-kun, from the Eusford house, I see. Alright, I will remember your name."

So he knew the Eusfords. It appeared he really was a nobleman then.

"And who would you be?" Crowley asked.

The beautiful man gave his name, "Ferid Bathory. I am, indeed, of noble descend, but only a rural aristocrat, so no need to be so polite with me. You are of noble ancestry yourself, after all, no?"

Crowley laughed, "Yes, but I am only the third son with nothing to inherit."

However, Ferid chuckled at that, too. "Then, let's say that I am the third son myself as well, and dispense with the formalities, Crowley-kun. Oh, and you can call me simply "Ferid-kun", too."

What an easygoing man.

Crowley didn't reply, posing a question of his own instead, "If you do not mind my asking, what are you doing here?" "I'm here to kill a woman or two, of course," Ferid replied pleasantly.

Crowley stared at Ferid, and Ferid chuckled. "What, do I have to answer that seriously?"

"If possible."

"Interrogating me already, are you?"

"No, that was not my inten—"

"But well, there is only one reason why one would come to a place with prostitutes. I'm here to buy a woman. Or what, are you one of those who'd rather preach to the prostitutes, Crowley-kun? How sick," Ferid commented, having entirely too much fun.

Crowley was starting to think that, in addition to being easygoing, the man was also mildly annoying.

"I'd think you have no business being here, considering that there are appropriate brothels for nobles." Inadvertently, he ended up losing some of his politeness.

Ferid grinned at that. "And I would think that you are no different either. Anyone would get bored to death if they had to eat the same food every day, no?"

"Well, I don't know about that. I don't buy women."

"Eh, are you a virgin then?"

Crowley didn't deign that with a response.

But Ferid continued, grinning broadly all the while, "No, that's not possible. With that body and that face, there is no way women would leave you alone."

With that, Ferid reached out to touch Crowley's chest.

But Crowley caught him by the hand before he could. It was a slender hand, one that looked like he could easily break it if he wanted.

But Ferid only continued mirthfully, "Not to mention, the irresistible temptation of being a Templar Knight. Upon enrollment, you all take the oath of honorable poverty, chastity and pliability, but in reality you are drowning in money, women and avarice, no? Women you sleep with are not the ones found in this poor quarter, but those of nobility, am I right?"

Crowley glared at Ferid. "Aren't you being a little over-familiar?"

"Am I?"

"You're a sodomite, aren't you?"

"I just told you that I'm here to buy a woman?"

Crowley tossed Ferid's hand back to him and put some distance between himself and the man.

Then he said, "In any case, this place is out of business now. All the women are dead."

Ferid gave another joyful laugh. "True, it doesn't seem like I will catch anything today. But well, this might be my chance to try doing it with a corpse."

As he was saying something as ridiculous as that, he squatted down next to the dead body lying on the ground, about to reach for it.

"What are you doing?" Crowley asked.

Ferid meanwhile pushed a finger into the gaping wound on the victim's throat. Squelching sounds filled the space as he fumbled inside the wound.

What a freak, Crowley thought, but under the circumstances, it was much more preferable to try and get some information out of the man who could keep his wits about him despite the situation rather than out of the panicking townspeople driven by superstitions and trembling in fear of an unknown monster, so Crowley continued his questioning.

"You..."

"Call me 'Ferid-kun'."

"Alright, Ferid-kun, are you a frequent visitor in these parts?"

"You could say so, for the last few months at least."

"Then, did you know that these murders have been going on for a while? More than 30 women were killed by now, as I heard."

"I feel I heard something about it from one of the women... Aah~ Now that I think about it, there was a girl who told me a ridiculous story in bed about a bloodsucking monster - a vampire - appearing from time to time. Needless to say that I didn't believe her. But I have to say that after seeing this, I'm definitely more open to believing," Ferid answered.

"Believing what exactly?" Crowley asked.

"That vampires do exist."

"No way."

"Why not? You believe in the existence of God, but deny the existence of vampires?"

That statement was very thin ice. Depending on who heard him, there was a possibility of Ferid being branded for life as an immoral heretic.

Gazing down at Ferid, Crowley warned him, "You'd better be more careful with such declarations."

"Oh? Are you worried about me, even though we only just met?"

Ferid's face, as he looked up at Crowley happily, was so innocent that Crowley's anger deflated. But still...

"I advice you not to say such things in front of other Templars. The circumstances are highly abnormal as it is without you adding more fuel. A witch or devil worshipers' involvement will be suspected. So if you know what's good for you, refrain from careless remarks. Well, it's another story if you're the killer and a devil worshiper yourself though."

Ferid let out a laugh. "I never! I never! I'm a child of God, too. I even go to church from time to time~"

As he was informing Crowley of that, he pulled his fingers out of the victim's throat.

Just then, a voice came from behind them.

"Crowley-sama!"

Crowley turned his head. Jose was back, but none of the Templar Knights accompanied him. He probably rushed back here ahead of them.

Ferid commented, "Who is this cute boy? Your lover?"

Not dignifying that with a response, Crowley asked, addressing Jose, "So? Are they coming?"

"Yes! They will be here shortly!"

"I see. My job here is done then."

"Oh no... Everybody is hurrying here because this is a chance to see you, Crowley-sama."

All the more reason why he should leave immediately.

If he did see them, they would just nag him again about how much they wanted him to return.

That's why Crowley said, "Jose."

"Yes, sir?"

"I'll leave this to you. Make the Templars properly investigate this case."

"Eh? But..."

Ignoring his objections, Crowley left Jose in charge and headed for the exit from the alley.

"Ah, wait a moment. I'm leaving, too. If you're not around, I'll become a witch hunt target~," Ferid said, following after him, but Crowley didn't spare him a glance.

He took his leave a little too late, though. At the entrance to the alley, he ran into several Templar Knights.

Leading them was Gilbert. The others were also high ranking knights he was acquainted with, and their squires, about 20 people. What a big gathering. The question was, did they all come here to capture the devil worshiper or to meet Crowley face to face?

Gilbert addressed him, "Crowley-sama. When we heard that you were requesting help, we came rushing to your side. All of us here are your supporters."

It looked like their motive was the latter, after all.

Crowley said, "That's beside the matter. In this alley, 8 women were killed. Please find and arrest the culprit."

At that, Gilbert peeked into the alley behind Crowley. "I heard that devil worshipers might be involved."

"Go see it with your own eyes."

"Then, let us go together..."

But Crowley shook his head, "No, I have somewhere else to be after this."

"Crowley-sama, I am aware that that is a lie. I do no intent to let you run away any—"

Ferid chose that moment to step out from behind Crowley's back.

"Well~ That is true though~ I have invited Crowley-kun to the dinner party I'm holding today in my mansion... On the way, we got dragged into this queer affair though. But now that you, the Knights Templar, are here, there is nothing to worry about anymore. Oh boy, am I glad to see you here! Now the townsfolk can rest assured, and we can make it to the dinner party in time," he said with a smile.

Crowley wondered if he was trying to help him.

Gilbert stared at Ferid, but said nothing. He instantly grasped from Ferid's appearance and the way he carried himself that the man must have been a noble.

"Now, Crowley-kun, let's go, shall we?"

"Hm? Sure~"

"Come on, come on," Ferid pulled him by the hand. With a nod, Crowley allowed it, following him.

Seeing that, Gilbert snapped, "Jose."

"Y-Yes, sir! What can I help you with, Gilbert-sama?"

"What's the duty of a squire?"

"U-Um..."

"If his master loses his way, it's one of the duties of his squire to set him straight, don't you think?" Gilbert inculcated something completely uncalled-for. Then, turning to Crowley, he said, "Crowley-sama. You will come back to us. We all believe you will."

But Crowley preferred to respond nothing to that, following Ferid in silence.

Next to him, Ferid chuckled quietly, commenting, "Haha, you are so popular, Crowley-kun."

Crowley gave Ferid, who was still pulling him by the hand, a weary look.

They walked like that for a short while longer, but upon turning the first corner, Crowley jerked his hand free from Ferid's grasp. "That would be enough."

"Really? So how did you like it?"

"What?"

"Did I help you?" Ferid asked shamelessly.

Giving Ferid a look that clearly expressed how fed up with all of this he was, Crowley replied, "Well, yeah, I guess."

"Feel like thanking me yet?"

"I didn't ask for your help."

"Ahaha. True, that. Anyway, what are you going to do now?"

"I'm going home."

"Huh? But weren't you supposed to attend my dinner party tonight?"

"You're not holding any party tonight. And I'm not invited anyway."

"Then how about I invite you? Come."

"No."

"Eh? Why not?"

"I don't want to go to the house of some pervert I just met who sticks his fingers into corpses' throats."

That elicited another laugh from Ferid. "Hahaha, I did it because you were not going to, and now you're calling me names for my effort."

With that, Ferid quickened his pace a little and overtook Crowley, positioning himself in front of him. He then outstretched his hand towards Crowley. The one he rummaged inside the woman's throat with. Holding up his bloodstained fingers, he rolled something between them. As he did, an object much like a metal needle pinched between his fingertips became visible.

"Hm? What is that?" Crowley asked.

Ferid shrugged, "I wonder myself."

"Don't tell me you took it out of the victim's throat?"

"Uh-huh. And I think that this is the murder weapon."

"Wha, you can't just make off with that!"

"Eh? Why not? I see no problem. You and I only need to solve this case by ourselves, is all."

"Huuh? Why do we have to do that?"

"Because it looks fun?"

"Uh, Ferid-kun, you... anyway, you must give that back to the Templar Knights," Crowley insisted, but Ferid only laughed.

"Fine. Here, it's all yours, Templar Knight-kun," he said presenting the needle-shaped object to Crowley. "Go back there and return it to them yourself. Of course, should you do so, they will be all over you again begging you to come back to them."

Crowley grimaced, making Ferid laugh once more.

"Well, I'd say, don't be a stick in the mud and come dine with me tonight. We can talk about what to do next then."

"No, there's nothing to do next. What do you even want with this?" Crowley asked head-on.

Ferid, whose fingertips were playing with the needle nimbly, suddenly stopped and threw an appraising gaze at it. Then he said, "Made of silver. Hollow inside. The culprit sucked the victims' blood or drained it through it. So our

vampire that killed 8 women in that alley is silver-fanged.” The words were flowing in one fluid stream. Ferid continued, “But well, no creature has silver fangs growing naturally, so someone made it for them. Very few craftsmen can make an orifice that tiny in a silver needle, so the one who made this must be a famous chaser, no doubt. This is the angle we can work. I love beautiful things, and of course, I have a few acquaintances among chasers, so should I ask them who could be skilled enough to make this?”

This man, who had just gotten all of that out in one breath, had a terribly sharp mind, Crowley realized. He didn’t stick his fingers into the corpse’s throat out of sick perversion. It was because he had immediately concluded where was the likeliest place to find traces of evidence at in those circumstances had there been left any.

“Can I ask you something?” Crowley inquired.

“What might it be?”

“The other bodies—”

But it was as if Ferid anticipated the question. “No, I doubt any evidence was left on the other bodies. The seven that were hoisted up had been processed in a controlled and fastidious fashion. Not a single drop of blood was left. They were hanged at perfectly equal intervals, too. Like a work of art. That’s why I think that the killer is probably a very compulsive fellow.”

He rolled the needle between his fingers once more before continuing. “But when you look at the last body... There was a blood splatter on the wall. And the ground was dirtied with some a little, too. The body wasn’t even hoisted up. Sloppy. So very sloppy. There is no doubt that some sort of trouble occurred when the killer was dealing with the last victim. Maybe she put up unexpected resistance, or someone saw them. At those times, it is all too easy to accidentally leave behind some leads. So I decided to check the wound just in case, and sure enough, there it was.”

He threw the needle to Crowley, and Crowley caught it, looking it over. On his own, he might not have even noticed that the needle was hollow inside, so tiny the opening was.

He inquired once again, “Can I ask another question?”

“What is it? What is it?”

“Who are you?”

At that question, Ferid grinned broadly. “I’m your sweet and amusing friend,” he replied.

What a weirdo I got stuck with, Crowley thought to himself. He had no idea what the man was thinking. To make things even worse, this new “friend” was frighteningly smart. Crowley’s instincts were beginning to sound the not-yet-very-loud alarm, warning him that associating with this fellow might be dangerous.

Crowley felt the urge to lift his hand up to his neck.

But there, Ferid suddenly remarked, “You should probably get rid of that habit to clutch at the rosary like some kid rushing to grab on his mommy’s skirt every time he feels uneasy, don’t you think?”

“...”

But Crowley’s hand wasn’t even moving. Just the muscles tensing in his arm in response to the urge, but that was apparently enough for Ferid to base his comment on.

If the man could notice something like that, then he had to also recognize it when Crowley was ready to draw his sword earlier. And yet, back at the crime scene, he didn’t look alert in the slightest.

Why was that?

Crowley asked him that much. “Why didn’t you try to get away from my sword?”

He was sure the man understood what he was talking about.

Ferid looked at him and answered, "Because you seemed like a good person. Besides, someone as frail as me wouldn't be able to get away from your blade anyway."

"...Then, you did notice that I was about to draw my sword?"

"Yes, I did."

"And still acted casual without a care in the world?"

"As I have already just told you, you seemed like a good person."

The guy had a screw loose in his head somewhere - that was the only possible explanation. Knowing that he was being threatened with violence, with the possibility of getting killed, and still laughing flippantly and taking no action was nowhere near normal.

The man was not normal, yet he was strangely fascinating.

"Well then, Crowley-kun. What are you going to do now? Will you indulge me and tag along with this little detective game of mine to solve this case with me?"

Just then, Jose caught up to them. "Crowley-sama! Ahh, I am so glad that you did not leave yet."

Crowley turned to him and asked, "How is the investigation looking?"

"Ah, the knights are about to collect the bodies," Jose replied.

But there were no leads to be obtained from those bodies anymore.

"Also, in order to prevent the next such case from happening, it was decided that that neighborhood will be patrolled."

Those measures would probably be not nearly enough to catch this particular killer. Ferid said that whoever was behind the murders was compulsive and methodical. If so, there was no way the Templar Knights, who weren't serious about investigating this case to begin with, would be able to catch the culprit.

Unless a noble got killed or they were requested to solve the case in exchange for a big donation, they would not lift a finger no matter how many prostitutes got slaughtered.

In other words, it was safe to assume that unless he and Ferid took action on their own, the killer would not be caught.

Gazing at the bloodstained needle in his hand, Crowley asked, "Ferid-kun."

"Hm?"

"Do you really have a lead on the chaser?"

Ferid grinned, "I do."

"Can you show me the way right now?"

"No. I'm too tired~ So today, come to my dinner party, restore your energy, and tomorrow, we will continue."

So it seemed he wanted to have Crowley come over for dinner with him no matter what.

However...

"What if I declined the invitation to that dinner party of yours?"

"Oh but you will not," Ferid said with an expression on his face as if he knew for sure that Crowley would not, then produced a small piece of paper from his breast pocket and handed it over to Jose.

"Eh? What is this...?"

"The address of the residence I'm currently staying at. You can come, too, Jose-kun. The more people I have at my

dinner party, the merrier.”

With this, he took his leave, strangely happy and walking with a gait that was all too light.

Watching his retreating form, Jose asked, “Who was that?”

“A noble, apparently.”

“Ohh. It is nice to make acquaintances with a nobleman. Even his clothes looked so pretty.”

Indeed, everything about the man was suspiciously beautiful, be it the way he looked, the way he moved or the way he spoke.

A man so beautiful that he seemed to be made to corrupt people—

And in hindsight, the moment when he felt fascination with the man had become the start of it all, Crowley thought.



This completes chapter 2.

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela by *Kagami Takaya*

Chapter 2 (part 3/3) (volume 1, pages 105-120)

◆◆◆

Perhaps too much money really made people lose their minds, Crowley thought, standing in front of Ferid's estate where he had been invited to.

Ferid's residence was located in a lonely place on the outskirts of the town.

When Crowley introduced himself and Jose at the front gate, it opened and they were let in without delay.

Inside, a dozen of boys and girls stood in a line, greeting the two of them in chorus. "Welcome, Crowley-sama, Jose-sama! Thank you for visiting!"

The clothes those boys and girls wore were highly bizarre. Crowley had no idea out of what material they were made, but the cloth was similar to thin transparent veil, and depending on the amount of light, their nude bodies showed through faintly. Those little glimpses felt more obscene than if the children had been naked to begin with.

Face flushed, Jose looked shocked. "Whoa! Whoa! Just what on earth is this?!"

The pervert's pastime hobbies, what else, Crowley snorted in his mind. Although he did feel a little like bursting out laughing at how cheerfully and openly perverted the master of this mansion was.

Crowley took a closer look at the boys and girls before him. All of them, without an exception, had the makings of

growing up into stunningly beautiful men and women.

One of the girls informed him, "Ferid-sama is waiting for you. Please this way."

Crowley nodded and proceeded further into the mansion. Inside, he found Ferid, who was grinning from ear to ear.

"Hello, Crowley-kun, Jose-kun. So you came after all, like I knew you would."

Crowley nodded and came to stand directly before Ferid. As he did, the children followed, crowding him.

"What's up with their clothes?" he asked Ferid.

"They are pretty, aren't they? Want to try wearing them?"

"Don't be ridiculous."

"But you're so well developed that they would definitely look great on you," Ferid expressed regret at being turned down.

But Crowley wasn't done with the questions yet, "So what's up with these kids? Is that what you're into?"

Ferid shrugged, "No, not at all. I just wanted to please you, Crowley-kun."

"Well, you've failed to."

"Oh no! And here I thought I was onto something. But well, I have a wide choice, from children to adults. If you see anyone you'd like to sleep with, just say so."

"I'll pass, thank you."

"Why?"

"Because my future would look bleak if I accepted your hand-me-downs."

"Hahaha, well, I don't touch them though, their bodies are not what I'm after," Ferid remarked cryptically.

Crowley didn't quite understand those words. It wasn't the kids' bodies he was after, Ferid said... just what on earth was that supposed to mean?

Crowley was completely lost as to what exactly rich perverts did to pass the time.

Throwing a glance to his side, he observed Jose as the boy walked next to him with his eyes cast down and not knowing where to look. The boy was still young and probably didn't have much experience with these things.

Ferid watched the embarrassed Jose with barely contained glee, and Crowley sighed, thinking about how seriously weird a place they ended up coming to.

Then it occurred to him, "Ferid-kun, why did you come to a shabby alley like that if you have all these cute kids waiting on you?"

"Hm~? Well~, because once I get my hands on something I want, I quickly lose interest in it."

"You really are a creepy man."

"But you still thought that associating with me looks like fun, right? Otherwise, you wouldn't have come here."

He was right on the mark, too. But Crowley only gave him a lopsided smile and said, "At the very least, I wouldn't want to be a knight serving you."

"I might be a surprisingly good master though."

"Not possible."

"No, no, you cannot say that until you try."

"Out of question."

Bantering like that, they made it to the dining hall.

It was a quiet and spacious room. Inside, a very nice fragrance drifted - a faint smell of incense sticks burning. Crowley knew the scent. It was the kind that numbed the brain, inducing hallucinations. But oh well, in those

quantities, it shouldn't have much effect.

In the center of the room there was put a long table, and on it was beautiful tableware and more food than anyone could eat.

Also, two sets of silver knives and spoons were prepared. From that alone, Crowley got a fairly good idea of just how vastly rich Ferid was.

Usually, knives were not something that would be found on the dining table, and this was Crowley's first time seeing knives that were made out of metal as expensive as silver.

Ferid took a seat at the side where no knife or spoon was prepared. In other words, he was not going to eat, which prompted Crowley to ask, "Aren't you going to dine as well?"

Ferid smiled at the question, "I'm a light eater, you see."

"Does that mean the food is poison-laced?"

"Why would I poison it?"

"To make me wear those weird clothes?" Crowley ventured, and Ferid laughed mirthfully.

"Oops, what a blunder on my part. I should have poisoned the food then."

Crowley took a seat, and Jose took his across from him.

A glance at the food revealed that there was a lot of meat among the dishes. Officially, for the Knights Templar, consuming meat was forbidden. They were only allowed to eat it on three certain days of the week. What was the day today, again?

Crowley himself hardly observed the strict regulations of the Knights Templar anymore, but for someone young like Jose, who was to follow even stricter self-restrain norms than the higher ranking knights, the sight of all this extravagant food, laid out right in front of him, could easily go to his head.

Women, meat and wine.

And as if that wasn't bad enough already, there was also the burning fragrance that made one lose control of oneself.

Crowley observed Jose, who was staring fixedly at the meat in front of him.

Also watching Jose, Ferid declared, "Patience is no virtue when there is delicious food before you. So let us toast to our today's meeting and get to the meal."

A girl, serving at dinner, put a ceramic goblet, that was filled to the brim with red liquid, in front of Ferid.

For some reason, to Crowley, the liquid looked like blood.

For a moment, the thought of 8 women, killed in that backalley, floated through his mind. The women whose blood was drawn out. But what did the killer intend to do with the extracted blood?

The bloodsucking monster.

The monster that drank human blood.

"..." These words made him remember that battlefield again. The nightmare that haunted him every day.

And in that bad dream, the strange monster that could only be an illusion, always appeared. Was that monster there to show him how weak his heart was for not ever wanting to set foot on that battlefield again? He saw that nightmare so often that by now he couldn't tell anymore.

Crowley only knew that that monster never failed to appear at the end of the dream about the war that he saw every day.

The beautiful vampire with bronze skin.

That vampire easily killed his comrades and, sinking his fangs into their necks, sucked out their lifeblood.

Watching as Ferid took the goblet filled with the liquid resembling blood, Crowley asked him, "What's in that glass?"

"This? Oh, this is red wine," Ferid replied.

"It's a little too red for wine, though."

Just then, the girl put porcelain goblets in front of Crowley and Jose as well. They were filled with liquid of the same color.

It smelled of alcohol. The scent was, indeed, that of red wine. But it still looked suspiciously too red.

"I had a few drops of the blood of the game that is served at tonight's dinner added to the red wine," Ferid explained.

"How do you like it? It does create the atmosphere, don't you agree? After all, we are going to exterminate a bloodsucking monster after this," he laughed.

So it appeared that this was the reason.

Ferid grinned, "Well then, let us get this dinner party started, shall we? To today's meeting and resolution of the case," he raised his goblet.

Jose did the same, still seemingly trying to be reserved on Crowley's account.

When Crowley, sparing another look to the contents, raised the hand with his, Ferid declared, "To new friendship," and took a sip out of his.

Crowley also put the liquid to his lips. Apparently, it was true that only a few drops of blood were added, because it didn't taste like blood at all. The taste was that of alcohol of fine quality he had never drunk before.

And so, the dinner had started. The conversation topics were all something silly. Little anecdotal stories from Ferid's travels through various lands that could or could not have happened. They were amusing in their own right, and the dinner turned out to be more enjoyable than Crowley had ever expected.

Jose, in particular, wolfed down the food and gulped down the wine at a breakneck speed that made Crowley worried about the possibility of him harming his health. When Jose's eyes started to glaze over, Crowley found it necessary to chastise him, "Jose, that would be enough for you."

"Ah, uh, no, I'm still alright."

There, Ferid interjected, "Then how about another glass?"

"Ferid-kun."

Ferid only laughed, "You know, I have those transparent clothes prepared for you, too, Jose-kun. And now, I only need you to drink yourself silly."

What an impossible man.

Crowley chuckled, "Jose, if you don't want to disgrace yourself for life, call it a night."

"I'm still awwright tho'."

He was already slurring, yet stubbornly drank another refill of wine. Once he did, for some reason, he proceeded at glare at Crowley.

“Actually, Crowley-sama, why are you not drinking at all~? You are always so composed, and it is so unfair. Please don’t run away.”

Yet another demand not to run away, huh.

“Jose.”

“You are always, always like that. Everybody is waiting for you so much, yet what are you doing?”

“Jose. Enough is enough.”

“You are the hero of the Crusades, of the Knights Templar! All the knights admire you. And yet, you... just for how much longer are you going to pretend to be a simple swordsmanship instructor of a backwater town?! Some of the knights are saying that this is it for Crowley-sama, and when I hear it, it’s so frustrating, and it hurts so much...!” He actually began to cry. It really was high time for them to take their leave then.

Crowley tossed a questioning glance at Ferid, but Ferid wasn’t about to let them go, “No, I cannot let you leave just yet, Crowley-kun. I have a place for him to sleep at already prepared.”

“But...”

“You aren’t even drunk yet. I cannot possibly send a guest home without making sure he is completely sated.”

Jose interjected, “Are you listening, Crowley-sama?! Ferid-sama, please give Crowley-sama a piece of your mind, too. In the Crusades, this person, against tens of thousands of pagans—”

But at that moment, Ferid stood up. “Now, now, you are clearly drunk. Why don’t you go rest a little?”

“No, ‘am pefftlly fine!”

“Ella. Show him to the room where he can sleep,” Ferid ordered, and the most beautiful girl among those serving them replied, “Yes, sir.”

She touched Jose’s back lightly and said, “Knight-sama. Please this way.”

“Uh, erm, um...” Jose stammered out, visibly flustered.

Well, it wasn’t every day one saw a girl as beautiful as that one, so it wasn’t like Crowley didn’t understand him.

Meanwhile Ferid, throwing a look at Crowley, asked Jose, “Squire-kun, do you like Ella?”

“Eh, uh, ah, it’s, um...”

“If you want, you can sleep with her.”

“Really?!”

Just how light was the Knights Templar’s oath of abstinence and chastity, for goodness’ sake?

To his credit, Jose seemed to realize it, too. “Ah, m-my apologies, Crowley-sama. I overstepped myself,” he apologized, looking at Crowley, but Crowley was finding it all too tiresome to deal with, so he gestured to Jose to leave already. Eyes wide, Jose hurried to get out of the dinner hall, following the beautiful girl named Ella.

Crowley gave a strained smile at that and, shifting his attention to Ferid, commented, “Meat. Wine. Women. Good grief, you’re one devil of a man, aren’t you.”

Ferid gave him a broad grin. “It’s humans’ own fault if they fall into depravity~” he replied with an exaggerated theatrical gesture like an actor playing the role of the Devil.

Crowley laughed.

At this dinner, Ferid really didn’t touch any of the food at all. He only drank wine all the time. Maybe he had some illness or some condition that made it impossible for his stomach to hold normal food, Crowley mused.

Crowley’s goblet was refilled with wine yet again. How many glasses did he have already?

Ferid observed, "You really are strong. In truth, you're drinking more than Jose-kun, but it's like you don't get drunk?"

"Oh, I'm drunk alright."

"Then get even more drunk. And when you do, I want you to tell me more about yourself."

"I have no entertaining stories suitable for the palate of a playful nobleman."

"I have to wonder about that. For instance, I wouldn't mind hearing about the Crusades that Jose-kun mentioned earlier."

"..."

"And I will not accept no for an answer. You heard all about my travels earlier, didn't you? Now it's your turn. Tell me the heroic tale of Crowley Eusford."

Crowley frowned at that, "There were no heroes in that war."

"Then what was there?"

"Nothing. We just lost, is all."

"Let me hear the cold hard truth about that defeat, then. Or what, did you really come here to eat your fill without paying back with any tales of your own? What an impudent fellow."

He was probably right, that would be rude. This wine alone had to be really expensive, not to mention everything else. Gazing at the wine swirling in his goblet, Crowley said as if musing aloud, "...War is dull. I mostly forgot all about it anyway."

That was a lie. He saw it in his dreams almost every day. In his terrible nightmares.

And it was as if Ferid saw right through him when he said, "I have to wonder if slaughtering countless people is something one can forget so easily."

"..."

"The truth is, you want to talk about it. But until now, there was no one who would listen. They all declared you a hero, praising you to high heaven and wanting you to act the part."

"..."

"If you don't, they will be forced to acknowledge that the war was a lost cause even before it was waged. They all know it for a fact already though. But it's necessary for the Crusaders to preserve their honor. That's why they need a great hero. They pushed the role on you, and you ran away. However, I'm not a knight. Just a debauched aristocrat. And maybe..." Ferid held out a hand to Crowley, "...your new friend. So just relax and talk to your heart's content. Any immoral and unscrupulous stories are warmly welcome. What, did you abandon your comrades and run away? Or kill some of them? Disgraceful stories, ugly stories, I will listen to them all. Take the load off your mind. I will listen with pleasure. So just try talking."

For some reason, when he had been told that, Crowley felt his tongue coming untied.

To begin with, he never talked to anyone about the war since he had come back from that battlefield. Yet, why was he about to reveal his innermost thoughts and emotions to a man he only just met? It was nothing short of a mystery.

Maybe the wine was to blame. Or the incense. Or the strange charm of this deranged noble.

Ferid said, "Come on, let me hear the true heroic tale of yours and yours alone. Just what did you see on that battlefield...?"

And at that question, the words of his story began flowing out of Crowley's mouth.

About the scenes he saw every night replayed over and over again in his nightmares. About God he had lost on that battlefield, and about the real Devil that he ended up seeing there.



We're delving a little deeper into the history of the Crusades now; crash course on it is included in the text of the novel already, but just in case [wiki](#) for the Fifth Crusade Crowley participated in (his participation apparently lasted from 1217 to 1221).

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela by *Kagami Takaya*

Chapter 3 (part ¼) (volume 1, pages 121-150)

The Crusader Who Lost God

It was in 1217, before they departed for the Crusade.

"Hey, guys, you get this, don't you? This war is our chance to demonstrate our overwhelming power as the Knights Templar! So show both the other knights and the enemies what you've got! Teach them just who are the chosen by Our Lord here!" one of the knights shouted.

The other knights raised their glasses and let out a war cry of their own.

On that day, in the big dining hall, the knights who were going to participate in the Crusade were allowed to have much more extravagant food than usual, before they went to war. There was meat, wine and even women - the knights feasted the night away tonight.

They were about to go to the Crusade, the holy war under the banner of the Lord's name, to slay pagans and recapture the Holy Land.

It was a just war. And all of them believed, without a shadow of doubt, that what was waiting for them in it was the

glorious path to victory.

In the corner of the hall, Crowley drank wine in silence.

But he wasn't left alone for long as someone called out to him, "Hey, Crowley, what are you doing hiding in a corner like that? Come to us and let's raise hell together tonight!"

Looking in the direction of the voice, Crowley found Victor, a knight of the same high rank as himself, standing there. Victor was a blond with green eyes; he joined the Knights Templar at about the same time as Crowley, and they practiced together a lot.

Victor emptied his glass in one gulp and, throwing it to the floor, took another.

"Look at how many cute girls are here tonight."

"Girls, huh? What happened to our oath of chastity?"

"Aw, don't be a party-pooper. We can think about that starting tomorrow. There won't be any women on the battlefield anyway. If you don't have your share of fun now, you'll sure as hell regret it later, I'm telling ya."

"That's rich coming for someone who's always fooling around with girls."

"How come you know that?!"

"Saw a noble girl you dumped the other day crying her eyes out over you."

"Which one?"

"Good grief."

"Well, anyway. This is a rare opportunity when you don't need to hide to have a little fun with girls, so why not take it and make the best of it? Hey guys! Crowley's joining us!"

When he shouted that, the other knights met the announcement with cheers and excitement. The girls, dressed up gaudily for the occasion, also squealed loudly, making a racket.

Victor shot Crowley a narrowed-eyed look. "You bastard, popular as ever, I see. So, with how many among these girls did you sleep?"

"I didn't sleep with any. A Knight Templar is supposed to keep his chastity."

"Yeah, right, as if I'd believe that. All the girls can't take their eyes off you."

"Then, with how many among them did you sleep?"

"Four."

"Oh come on."

"Hahaha," Victor laughed innocently.

Victor was someone who enjoyed popularity among both men and women. He always dressed with a touch of style, and the Roleine family he was from was a fairly high class noble house.

But the reason for his popularity wasn't his parentage. It was because he was sunny and cheerful and could get along with anybody.

Perhaps it was precisely because Victor joined the Knights Templar at the same time as Crowley that a thought of his training as a knight being hard never crossed Crowley's mind. Victor was always coming up with something amusing to do and never failed to get his comrades join him in on the fun, so Crowley was able to spend those days laughing and smiling.

That day was no exception. Even though he was about to set out to the frontlines where he could die, he couldn't help partying and having a good time.

Victor shouted, "Hey guys, listen up! Our dear comrade and the son of the Eusford house Crowley devoted his virginity to Our Lord, but tonight he's gonna part with iiiiiiiit!"

"Huh?!" Crowley stared at Victor in shock, trying to find a way to salvage the situation, but it was too late. The other knights had already jumped on it, having plenty of fun with the reveal.

"Hey, that's gotta be a joke, right, Crowley?!"

"I hope you're not gonna tell us that you're still sucking on your mommy's titties?"

Among this chorus, Victor shouted, "So, ladies, which one of you wanna steal Crowley's first time? First come, first served!"

One after another, the women responded,

"Me!"

"I'll make sure to be tender with Crowley-sama!"

Among them, one turned red in the face. "W-W-Wait a second! What do you mean, he is a virgin? O-Once before, me and Crowley-sama—" she started, but Victor closed her mouth with a kiss. "Ah," the girl shut up.

"Tonight, you'll be with me then, agreed?"

The girl nodded.

"Go drink in a corner somewhere then, I'll come for you later."

As she left, Victor turned and, grinning at Crowley, said to him, "So who was it again who said that he didn't sleep with any?"

"Hm~"

"Chastity, my ass. She's the prettiest girl here, you bastard!"

But Crowley answered nothing to that, only shrugging his shoulders.

Victor raised his glass. "Regardless, let's toast to this Crusaaaade!" he shouted.

And immediately, the comrades echoed that. Crowley smiled and raised his glass, as well. The noisy merrymaking continued, getting another boost.

Crowley, however, distanced himself a little from the center of it, drinking wine in silence once again. And again, not for long, as a man near him commented, "Good gracious. Must be nice to be so carefree like Victor and you, Crowley."

It was another comrade of theirs, Gustavo. He had wavy brown hair and gray eyes. He was a short man and not endowed with a muscular physique, but when it came to swordplay, he was impressively fast.

"Gustavo-senpai, are you not going to choose a woman for yourself?"

"I don't wanna die on the battlefield because of a broken chastity oath. After all..."

"...God sees everything, right?"

But Gustavo fell silent for a while, gazing at the partying comrades.

"...I wonder," he finally said. "It would be nice if He did. O Lord, please save me, I was always righteous, even on days like today. And while You are at it, make it so that the always outrageously popular guys like Victor and Crowley meet You, Our maker, before I do," Gustavo joked.

Crowley chuckled. "You are going to be alright though, Gustavo-senpai. You are strong. I have yet to win even once in a practice fight against you."

"Huh? That's because you're always holding back, no?"

"Eh?"

"Everyone knows how monstrous your strength is. Even the Commander is always saying how extraordinarily talented you are."

That was Crowley's first time hearing that though.

"Is he, now? The Commander never had any words of praise for me."

"Behind your back, he's always praising you, though. And well, if he finds out that I told you this, he'll kill me for sure. But that aside, in our future practice fights, I want you to—"

"Stop going easy on you?" Crowley asked, and Gustavo giggled.

"Nope, always go easy on me and me alone, and beat up the other senior knights within the inch of their lives. It will feel so satisfying!"

Crowley had to laugh at that.

Just then, a voice came from the entranceway to the hall. "C-Commander! Commander Alfred is coming!"

For a moment, silence engulfed the dining hall. All the knights stood at attention, not being able to utter a word.

The doors to the hall opened, and a man in his mid thirties, with a scar from a sword slash running across his right eye that was now permanently closed, walked through. The glint in his remaining, left, eye was particularly sharp.

Giving a once-over to the knights standing at attention, he said, "Now then, I trust you people had the decency to leave me my share of women properly?"

In all likelihood, it was probably supposed to be a joke, but if it wasn't, the chances were they wouldn't get off lightly with just getting beat up half to death, so no one dared to answer him.

After 5 very tense seconds, Victor found his voice. It was always him to take the lead at times like that.

"Of course, sir! We have prepared the most beautiful girl for you right here!"

With that, he pulled the girl he had kissed earlier by the hand.

"Eh? Eh?" the girl squealed in confusion.

"Good. Then I'll make an exception. Party hard tonight till you drop!" Alfred said, granting his permission.

At that, the knights bellowed their approval and resumed their drinking bout. Watching them with amusement, Alfred took the nearest bottle of wine and headed to where Crowley was.

Seeing him approach, Gustavo, who stood next to Crowley, said, "Oops, no good. Hey, Crowley."

"Yes?"

"Forget I said anything about the Commander praising you, okay?"

"Of course."

"Alright then. Maybe I'll go hook up with some girl after all."

"Yeah," Crowley laughed.

Grinning, Gustavo then went straight to the center of the party. His place next to Crowley was immediately occupied by the Commander.

"Having fun, Crowley?"

"Yes, sir, with your approval."

"You have only tonight to enjoy yourself as much as you can. There won't be anything like this on the battlefield."

"I know, sir."

"And another thing."

"Yes, sir?"

"What was that pathetic performance at today's afternoon practice? Keep it up, and you'll be the first one to die in battle."

Like that, Crowley got chewed out first thing upon the meeting. He wondered if it was true at all that the Commander ever praised him.

"I apologize, sir."

"Brace yourself. I don't want to let even one of my comrades die in this war."

"Of course, sir."

"That's why you need to slay more enemies than anyone else and protect our comrades."

"I understand, sir," Crowley nodded, and Alfred smiled at him and clapped him on the shoulder. He then went to the other knights.

It appeared that the Commander wanted to talk to each of them personally. Crowley stared at the Commander's back as the man went around the hall.

Ever since he had joined the Order, Crowley admired the Commander. Commander Alfred was revered by his subordinates and was a man great enough to live up to their expectations.

In the first place, it was the Commander who taught Crowley the basics of swordsmanship. The way of the knight, the attitude to life - Crowley learned everything from him.

And just now, Crowley had gotten a new order from him.

"...Slay more enemies than anyone else and protect our comrades, huh."

Without realizing, Crowley touched the rosary hanging around his neck. He was still so lacking, would he be able to do what the Commander asked him to?

He sensed someone come stand next to him again. Glancing to the side, he found there one of the younger knights, a rank below him, Gilbert Chartres.

Gilbert was another exceedingly excellent knight whom the Commander favored: diligent, hardworking and strong-willed. Numerous times after practice he would come to Crowley to request to spar with him, and he never slacked off in physical training.

He was very likely stronger than Victor, who was busy womanizing most of the time. And that would mean that Gilbert was one of the most powerful knights among all the Templars, because despite his ways, Victor was strong and had talent in abundance. No, in fact, there was such a spark in Victor's swordplay that it made Crowley think that if only Victor had put his best effort into training, perhaps not even Crowley himself would be able to win against him; Crowley always felt regret that Victor was letting such talent go to waste...

And watching that comrade of his with each of his arms wrapped around a woman right now, Crowley couldn't help a little wry smile that twisted his lips.

At his side, Gilbert spoke up, "What did you talk about with the Commander, Crowley-sama?"

Gilbert still insisted on being impossibly formal even in the middle of a merry feast like this.

Shifting his attention to Gilbert, Crowley replied, "He told me to try harder."

"Sir, you are skimping on the details a little too much, I feel."

"Hahaha," Crowley let out a laugh and drank another mouthful of wine.

Gilbert also fell silent for a while, watching Victor who was enjoying himself almost too much. Then, in a quiet voice, he asked a very short question, "...Can we win this war?"

"Who knows."

"Oh? Is it not your duty as a senior knight to fervently assure me that yes, of course we will win?"

"Is it, now?"

"It is. After all, this is a holy war to take back the Holy Land occupied by the Devil's spawn."

"Right."

"And that is why we will win for sure."

"I see. Well, if you believe in our victory so strongly, don't ask me such questions," Crowley said and threw a sidelong glance at Gilbert, only to find him wearing a hesitant frown. "What, are you scared?"

"No, I am most certainly not!"

But that was a barefaced lie.

There was no one who wasn't scared of war. And that was why they all were drinking and partying so hard tonight - to distract themselves from the imminent departure for the front. They drank wine, ate meat and made love to women, all in order to forget the fear they felt.

Only, that mortal fear, residing in the core of their beings, wouldn't go away. The dread of war. The terror of losing comrades. The fear of dying.

Crowley shifted his eyes away from Gilbert and back to his comrades, who were trying to enjoy themselves tonight as much as they could in a desperate attempt to run away from their fears.

Then he said, "Gustavo said something to me earlier..."

"What was it, sir?"

"That God is always watching us and sees everything. So those, whose ways are always righteous, will get to survive."

"I see. In that case, Gustavo-senpai and Victor-senpai are going to die."

"Hahaha, I wonder."

It so happened that at that moment, Gustavo, putting his short height to use, promptly stuck his head under the skirt of one of the women.

Well, if God was watching him right now, Gustavo really just might die.

But usually, Gustavo was a very nice senior, who would do what he could for his comrades without acting self-important about it. Back when Crowley was still a fresh recruit, Gustavo saved his life numerous times.

If one's habitual ways mattered any, then Gustavo should survive, no doubt, Crowley thought. If not, then it would raise the dubious question of what exactly God saw, if He did at all.

After watching for a while the happy-looking Victor and Gustavo laugh with the girls merrily, Crowley decided to go someplace else.

"Where are you going, sir?" Gilbert asked him.

"I've had a bit too much to drink. I need some fresh air," he answered and exited the dining hall.

Outside, non-noble knights were partying as well. They were allowed to have meat and wine tonight. But it looked like only the high ranking noble knights were allowed the company of women.

"Crowley-sama!" several squires serving under him got up, ready to come to his side, but he raised a hand to stop them.

"No need. Have fun to your heart's content tonight."

"Thank you very much, Crowley-sama!"

There were so many very young boys among them, boys of only 15 or 16. They all dreamed of distinguishing themselves in this Crusade and gaining fame. Regardless of where they were born, they all were good kids.

"Protect our comrades. Protect our comrades, huh," in a whisper, Crowley repeated to himself the Commander's order a few times, gazing at the boys.

Just then the bang of the dining hall's doors being thrown open reached his ears.

"Buurp~ I feel sick." Victor came out, holding his chest and spitting out a breath reeking of alcohol. Apparently, he, too, felt the need to get some fresh air.

When he appeared, his squires rushed over to him.

"Victor-sama!"

"Are you alright, Victor-sama?"

He raised his hand and said, "Ah, no good. No, I'm not alright. Fetch me some water."

"At once, sir!" the squires rushed to obey.

Crowley supported the slumping Victor and asked, "Gonna puke?"

"Urgh... Uh-huh."

"Geez, what do I do with you..." Crowley said and took Victor to a place some distance away from the dining hall.

Victor hunched over again and stared to wretch. Crowley rubbed his back as he did.

"Argh, what agony."

"That's what you get for forgetting your limits when you really can't hold your liquor."

"But everyone's drinking and having fun..."

"That doesn't mean that you absolutely have to go along with the flow though."

"No, no, if not me, then wh— bleeeeuurgh!" Victor spilled the contents of his stomach again.

The squires brought the water, and Crowley took it from them, telling them to go continue with their party. They still wanted to help their master deal with his predicament, but it would not do to have them witness the unbecoming sight of that master of theirs puking his guts out from drinking too much, so Crowley sent them off to party.

Victor, still retching nearby, said, "...Crowley."

"Mm~?"

"Gimme water."

"Here." Crowley handed the water over to Victor.

Panting heavily, Victor drained it. It seemed to help him calm down. "Haah, 'kay, I think I'm better now."

Sidestepping the vomit, Crowley dragged Victor to a place a little further away and sat him down, taking a seat beside him.

"Good grief."

"Yeah, that was rough."

"I would think."

"Thanks for the help, Crowley. You're my savior this once."

"Way to exaggerate. You're always puking, no? And I seem to recall getting stuck looking after you more often than not."

"Well, then I'll reword: you're my savior yet again."

"Yeah, yeah."

The drinking bout was still continuing both inside and outside the dining hall. Laughing voices could be heard from every direction. The merrymaking was in full swing, and it was hard to believe that only a few days later the partying knights and squires would be off to the frontlines.

Crowley was watching a group of squires absentmindedly, when Victor suddenly raised his head. Like Crowley, he gazed at the partying squires.

"They sure are having a blast."

"Wanna go back to the hall?"

"Can't."

"But if you don't go back, all the cute girls will be taken. Wasn't this the rare opportunity to touch girls without having to hide?" Crowley asked.

Victor grimaced and replied, "Aah~ Yeah, that's right, but, uh, probably not for me anymore. I drank too much, so I doubt I can get it up now."

"Hahaha," Crowley couldn't help laughing.

Around Victor, he really never felt hard pressed for a conversation topic. And that was why everyone wanted to be around Victor.

Said Victor, sitting next to Crowley, drew a few deep breaths, and his face turned serious as he asked, "Say, Crowley."

"Hm?"

"What do you think of this Crusade?"

"Meaning?"

"We're gonna invade a foreign country and wage war on the pagans there."

"Mn-hmm."

"Are you scared?"

To that, Crowley answered with honesty, "Yes, I am. What about you, Victor? Are you scared?"

"So much that my pee-pee's ready to shrivel up on me."

When Victor said that with such a serious face, Crowley burst out laughing again. "Even though you can't get it up?"

"Whether or not I can get it up has nothing to do with it~"

"Hahaha."

Having finished laughing, Crowley said, "We just need to come back with victory."

"Yeah, that's right, of course, but, uh... Can I survive?"

"...I don't know. But well, the Knights Templar who fell in battle can go straight to Heaven, I heard."

Victor looked up at the sky before responding, "Well~ I hope there are cute girls up there in Kingdom of Heaven then."

"Haha."

Crowley raised his eyes to the sky as well. There were hardly any stars visible. Tomorrow might be raining then.

"Hey, Crowley."

"Mm?"

"If you see me in danger, come rescue me, 'kay?"

"Yeah, sure. I got the same order from the Commander earlier, anyway."

"What did he say?"

"Slay the enemies. Protect the comrades."

"What a simple order," Victor chuckled.

That was when the Commander, Alfred, chose to come out of the dining hall. For a few moments, he gazed down at Crowley and Victor sitting not far from the vomit.

Flustered, Crowley was about to spring to his feet, but the Commander gestured to him not to. "Don't. Remain sitting."

"If it's alright with you, sir."

"Also, Victor."

"Uh, sir." Victor raised his pallid face to look up at him.

The Commander was probably done talking with all the high ranking knights in the dining hall. So Victor was likely the only one who had yet to receive his order from him.

"What is it, sir?" Victor asked.

"Before long, we will head to the battlefield," the Commander said.

"Yes, sir."

"Yet, what is with your pathetic state?"

"My apologies."

"Your saving grace is your cheerful optimism. The morale of the corps is bound to go up when you're there. So when on the battlefield, don't make a stupid pale face like that; cheer up your comrades with your optimism instead. Got it?"

Those were definitely the words of praise. Despite Victor always looking for opportunities to slack off during practice, the Commander knew exactly where his strengths and his worth lay.

Victor looked to be moved by that as he sprang to his feet, "I-If that is the way my unworthy self can be of some use, then I..."

But that was as far as his enthusiasm lasted, because the next moment saw him spilling the contents of his stomach yet again right where he stood.

The Commander roared with laughter. "What a fool!"

"I-I apologize, sir. But I will make sure to try my very best starting tomorrow."

"Good."

"Commander, if you don't mind my asking..."

"Hm?"

"Are you not going to bring a woman with you tonight?"

To that, the Commander only shrugged his shoulders. "I was married before joining the Order, so I'm spending the night with my wife tonight."

Victor looked surprised. "Oh, you have a wife, sir?"

Crowley didn't know either. But then again, while the Templar Knights were forbidden to have a relationship with women, if a member had a wife before joining, an exception was made.

"Then, sir, the night of passion before parting is awaiting you, huh?"

"Off with you!" the Commander laughed. With that, he turned around and walked away.

Watching his retreating back, Victor suddenly said, "Crowley."

"Yeah?"

"I think I'll try my best, after all."

"What, feeling revved up and ready suddenly?" Crowley asked, and Victor nodded.

"Yeah. If the Commander went home alone, that means that cutie is now free and all by herself! So I'm going back to the hall!"

"Oh boy, that's what you were going to try your best at, huh?" Crowley laughed. He seriously doubted that Victor, swaying unsteadily on his feet as he was when making his way back to the dining hall, would be able to handle a woman right now though.

Still, the two returned to the hall.

Everyone inside was even more drunk and jovial than before.

Even Gilbert's face was flushed when he complained, "Gracious~ Just where did you two go~?!"

And then, they all got back to drinking.

That was a very joyful night that Crowley remembered with perfect clarity even now.



And that was where Ferid Barthory interrupted Crowley's story with a question, "So, in the end, did you sleep with any of the girls that night?"

"That's what you're interested in?" Crowley countered.

Tipping his goblet a little, Ferid took a sip of the red wine. "If memory serves, I heard that we were winning at the beginning of this Crusade. After the enemy's stronghold, Damietta, was sieged, the opponents approached the crusaders with peace offers multiple times."

"Yeah."

"The crusaders had numerous chances to come back with victory. And in fact, a few countries' kings did just that. But you people still remained on the battlefield?"

"Yeah, that's right. We were unlucky like that."

The Fifth Crusade was not led by the monarchs of any of the countries but by a papal legate.

That papal legate, Pelagius, would not accept peace offers from pagans no matter what. He was a greedy man, fanatic to religious ideology. That's why he even made a declaration as questionable as "The Holy Land is to be taken back by Christian blood only."

Despite having plenty of chances to capitalize on the success and withdraw, he persisted in his obsession to conquer Cairo. And ultimately, it led to a defeat. To the crushing defeat and complete demise.

There was no way one could keep winning in a war forever. Because of their leader losing the moment to stop in time, countless crusaders died in vain.

Ferid asked, "So, among those who were present at the drinking party you just talked about, how many ended up losing their faith, like you?"

"..." Crowley didn't answer.

That didn't deter Ferid any, and he continued, "The fellow named Gilbert, he survived, I take it? He was the one to come to the murder scene today, right? And he wants you to return to them."

"Yeah."

"What about your other comrades? How many of them are still alive?"

That question made Crowley remember again what happened in the last campaign.

They seized the enemy's stronghold, and the kings and the papal legate began to struggle for control of that land; after that, a new campaign to gain even more victories and lands started.

Not enough. It still was not enough.

The Holy Land. Take back the Holy Land!

Maybe it was that insatiable hunger for conquest that brought the wrath of the Lord on them. Pestilence was rampant among the advance guard, and many of Crowley's comrades died of it. Even Guillaume de Chartres, the Grand Master of all the Templars, fell victim to it and died.

Nevertheless, the war didn't stop.

Forth. Charge forth. Only forth.

We can take back the Holy Land precisely because you are spilling your blood for it!

Those were their orders, and Crowley and his comrades continued to fight desperately.

He recalled what it was like.



Crowley's memories of the disastrous last campaign. For this part and the one after it, preparing some tissues beforehand is highly advised, because it's just tragic, and I couldn't help shedding a few tears.

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela by *Kagami Takaya*

Chapter 3 (part 2/4) (volume 1, pages 150-173)

◆ ◆ ◆

He could hear the beat. The deafening sound of his own heart thundering like a tocsin. And that was all he could hear.

The battlefield.

It really was a terrible place. The place where his comrades were dying pointlessly. Even though they were supposed to receive divine protection when they came to these lands as the troops of justice.

They won battle after battle, time and time again, and it was high time to end this war, and yet, why did it have to come down to this?

The enemies before their eyes were strong, and by now, it was the enemies that had the terrain advantage, luck - literally everything on their side.

"O Lord," Crowley whispered. "O Lord, please don't abandon us."

Despite everything being against them, the crusaders kept fighting desperately. For justice. For the cause. Under the banner of His name.

A dark-skinned pagan let out a war cry, "Uwoooooooooah!" and charged at him.

Crowley's sword beheaded him. "Die, you goddamn infidel!"

The head soared through the air. Spraying blood everywhere. Bathing him in it.

But he didn't care anymore. His whole body, from head to toe, had already been painted red. His comrades' blood, the enemies' blood, flesh, entrails - all stained his body.

He couldn't even tell anymore how many enemies he had already slain. He killed and killed and killed, and he had long since stopped counting, even though the number of slain enemies was what determined a knight's worth.

He didn't have strength or time to spare. Desperation was all that was left. Desperation to protect his comrades.

Only the words his Commander said to him before they came here, were repeating in his head in an endless loop. Slay as many enemies as you can. And protect your comrades.

He continued to follow that order.

He was just mindlessly killing, having completely forgotten what he was fighting for.

Just slaying. The enemies. Those who attacked him.

Killing the pagans who chose the wrong ideology to follow. Killing. Killing.

Piercing the chest of a man near him with his sword, Crowley then kicked him in the face, while pulling out the blade. Snatching a spear from an enemy, he hit that man in the face with the hilt of his sword, crushing his skull. He then threw the spear to lodge in the neck of a man who was putting an arrow in his bow.

In any case, kill. Kill the pagans. Kill them before they kill you!

"Huff... huff... shit, not yet, huh? The enemy isn't retreating yet..."

His heart felt like it was about to explode. And he was completely out of breath.

But he still said, while killing the enemy in front of him, "I'm alive. Right here, right now, I'm still alive!"

He would still whisper that in battle, as if praying. His left hand reached for the rosary on his neck unconsciously. His heart sought rescue. Calling to God.

Please save me from this absurd place, his heart screamed, beseeching God.

But the rescue wasn't coming. He didn't feel divine guidance.

Another enemy charged at him.

Crowley knocked aside his sword. On the backswing, his own blade hacked the enemy from the shoulder to the chest, gouging the man's heart, and with this, there were no enemies left before him.

A few more were staring at Crowley, who was now completely covered in blood, from a safe distance with frightened faces.

Crowley glared at the group. "What? Why aren't you having a go at me?"

"..."

They pointed fingers at him, saying something all at once.

“What is it? What are you saying?”

Then one of them shouted in Crowley’s direction, “Shaitan!”

Crowley knew that word’s meaning. In the pagans’ language, it meant “Devil”.

He had come this far on the will of God, only to be called a devil.

But he didn’t mind much. If that was what it took to end this battle, he didn’t mind.

Crowley shouted back to the pagans angrily, “That’s right! I’m a devil! The monster that God sent to slay you infidels! If you don’t wanna die, get the hell out of here at once! Those of you wanting to get grilled with hellfire, come before me!”

It would be nice if that angry roar of his lowered the enemy’s morale a little, he thought. Maybe they would even get scared enough to retreat.

“...” But things were not going to go that smoothly, it seemed. Of course, they wouldn’t. At the moment, the enemy had the overwhelming advantage of numbers.

After holding some sort of discussion, several pagan men gathered in a group and were now trying to mount an attack against Crowley.

“Damn,” the curse was barely out of his mouth when his senses picked up the whiz of the air being rended. The sound of an arrow having been fired.

“Tch!” He twirled in the direction of the sound, but it was already too late. He wouldn’t be able to dodge it now. Bringing up his right arm, he protected his head and heart at least.

But just when the arrow was about to hit his arm, Victor knocked it down with his sword from behind Crowley. “Don’t space out, Crowley!”

Gustavo and a few squires swooped down on the enemy soldier who had fired the arrow and killed him.

Crowley stared at Victor who had just saved him. Victor, too, was covered in blood and looked downright awful. “Idiot. Who will protect me if you die first?” he said, and Crowley nodded.

“Yeah, sorry. I’m glad you’re still alive.”

“Not for long though, with how this is going. The Knights Templar aren’t allowed to retreat. We either come back with victory or we come back dead... Agh, damn, I should’ve banged a chick or two before coming here, after all!” Even in their situation Victor spared effort for cracking jokes.

Crowley tried to laugh, but the muscles in his jaw locked and refused to move.

Before them, the enemy army far outnumbering them stood. Unless a miracle occurred, this was where they all would die, in all likelihood.

But he had no idea what meaning their death would have. It didn’t look like they had any chance to win this war anymore. It was impossible to take back the Holy Land now. It was a war that shouldn’t have been fought to begin with, one where their comrades only died meaninglessly.

The papal legate was leading a desperate suicide charge right about now somewhere, but it wasn’t likely to succeed. According to the widespread rumors, it was as if that legate understood nothing of and refused to see what war even was.

Which meant, they were going to die here in vain.

“...We’re dead. We’re going to die here, aren’t we,” Crowley murmured, and Victor laughed.

“Don’t say that.”

“I wish our death would be a little more honorable though.”

“You can always meet your end protecting me.”

At these words, Crowley gazed at Victor. “That would be honorable enough.”

“I know, right? But I’m outta here.”

“You’ll be charged if you run away from the battlefield.”

“Huh? Wasn’t there some rule saying that if you’re outnumbered by 3 to 1, it’s OK to escape?”

Now that Victor mentioned it, Crowley felt that there really might have been a rule like that. But...

“Will the enemy be generous enough to let us escape though?”

“Nah, no way. We’ve already killed too many of theirs.”

At that, Crowley was finally able to smile. “They called me Devil earlier.”

“Haha, that’s ‘cause you’ve been killing more than anyone.”

Just then, Gustavo’s shout came from behind them. “Fall back and let’s assemble in one group!”

Turning to him, Crowley nodded. They fell back a little, cutting down some enemies that came at them as they did.

Then another comrade’s shout resounded. “M-Men, the Commander’s been wounded!”

“Wha?!”

Crowley looked in the direction of the voice. Commander Alfred’s chest was adorned with a deep cut wound. A few high ranking knights were pulling back frantically while supporting him.

Gustavo suggested, “Hey, let’s go protect the Commander!”

But Crowley, after throwing another look at the Commander, shook his head. “No, I’m not going.”

“Why?!”

“The Commander said to me to slay as many enemies as I can and protect my comrades. If I went to his side right now, he’d scold me. That’s not an honorable death.”

“Fool! Who gives a damn about honor at this point! Where’s any honor in this anymore?!”

“But well, we’re going to be dying here in any case.”

“...Ugh.”

“Even if there’s no more honor in this battle, I want the Commander to praise me once I’m in heaven.”

Victor’s face twisted like he was about to cry. “Well, damn! Then I’m gonna stay with you.”

“You should go.”

“As if I could just leave you behind! If we’re gonna be dying here anyway, let’s die together!” Victor snapped and took the stance with his sword at the ready.

Gazing at the face of his close friend, Crowley gripped the handle of the sword in his hand tighter. Behind them, several squires and soldiers from commoners, participating in this Crusade as well, formed a line.

Victor said, “Crowley, take command.”

But there wasn’t any plan anymore requiring taking command and giving orders. They had already been defeated soundly. The only thing they could still do was to mount a head-on attack and kill as many enemies as they could before breathing their last. Nothing else was left to them.

That’s why, raising his sword, Crowley said, “Entrust me with your lives! We’re going on the offensive! Men—”

Just when he was about to shout “Charge!”, he heard the patter of hoofs behind him.

“Crowley-sama! Victor-sama!” It was Gilbert’s voice. He stopped his horse in front of them, blocking the way. “I have brought reinforcements!”

Crowley looked up at him, then threw a look behind him. He could see ten-odd mounted knights approach. But it wasn’t like a small cavalry unit like that could change their situation anymore.

Gilbert meanwhile shouted something in the pagans’ language. Crowley didn’t know what he said, but when Gilbert did, the enemies stopped dead in their tracks. Seemingly panicked, they started discussing something.

Victor asked, “Hey, Gilbert. Why did you say to them?”

“That our reinforcements of a few thousands are coming here as we speak.”

“And they’re coming?”

“No, they are not!”

“Huhh?!”

“So let us retreat while my bluff is still having the effect on them. The enemy is outnumbering us by more than 3 to 1, so we will not be blamed if we retreat now.”

Crowley remarked, “The moment they find out, they’ll give chase.”

“Yes, but right now...”

“If I’m going to die either way, I wouldn’t want to show my back to the enemy.”

But Gilbert, with a chagrined face, informed him, “...The situation has changed, sir. Although it is only a rumor that I cannot confirm, but...”

“But what?” Victor prompted him.

“It is likely that this war will end very soon,” Gilbert responded.

“Huh? What do you mean?”

“The papal legate... was captured, it seems.”

“Wha?! You’re kidding!” Victor exclaimed in shock.

But the possibility wasn’t at all inconceivable. The war situation drove the legate into a corner, and he resorted to a horribly reckless strategy. It was only the matter of time before the enemy exploited the glaring flaws of his plan.

Still, the one spearheading the campaign was that legate, Pelagius. The monarchs of the countries had already lost any interest in this war. So, if the legate was captured, what would become of this Crusade?

The utter and complete defeat was looking more real by the minute. In the light of this new information, they really needed to pull back and regroup.

Gilbert asked, “Where is the Commander?”

With a frown, Crowley replied, “He was injured.”

“Oh no.”

“His group is retreating to the rear.”

“I will go check on him!”

Gilbert was about to turn his horse around, but Crowley stopped him. “Wait, Gilbert. Finish acting out your bluff first, then go.”

“Ah...”

If he retreated in panic right now, the enemy would realize that the news about the reinforcements coming was a lie. They had to fall back slow and easy.

Gilbert pulled in the reins. Engaging in a staredown with the enemies, he withdrew slowly.

How much time would this buy? A few hours? One night?

In any case, right now they had to retreat - in order to find out what it was that they needed to do in this situation.

The enemies turned around and started to pull back all at once.

After confirming they were, Crowley also withdrew. As he did, he had the chance to see with his own eyes just how much damage his side had suffered.

On the ground, severed arms, heads and torsos of still so young squires were scattered. Crowley alone had ten squires serving under him, but right now, out of them all, the number of survivors was...

"Crowley-sama." One of them, Rosso, approached Crowley in tears. He was a tawny-haired boy of fair complexion and with freckles.

Crowley asked him, "Are you the only survivor?"

"...Yes, sir."

"Good job staying alive."

"...Thank you, sir."

Crowley patted the boy, who couldn't stop crying, on the shoulder.

"Uuh, if only I was stronger..."

"It's not your fault."

"But..."

"It is not your fault! If it hurts, then get stronger."

"Yes, sir!"

"Good," Crowley nodded his approval, although he himself didn't think that any of them could survive this anymore.

When they fell farther back, Commander Alfred, lying on the ground surrounded by the high ranking knights, came into view. A few of the knights were crying.

When the group noticed that Crowley and Victor were back, Gustavo, who was by the Commander's side, walked over to them.

As he approached, Crowley asked him, "How is the Commander doing?"

Gustavo shook his head with a terribly tired face. "The wound is bad, so he'll probably..." He didn't finish.

Die, it was then. Their Commander, so powerful and wise, was going to die in this poor excuse of a war. In this meaningless war that was unnecessary to begin with.

"Damn..." Crowley groaned, and his hand reached for the rosary on his neck. No matter how much he prayed to God, it was like He didn't help at all, yet a part of him still desperately clung to Him regardless.

Gustavo continued, "Crowley."

"Yes?"

"The Commander is calling you."

"Me? Why?"

But at that, Victor gave Crowley's back a push. "You're the Commander's favorite. So he must have something he wants to say to you."

Crowley looked at Victor and, nodding, went to where the Commander was.

Throwing a look at him, the knights that were by the Commander's side stepped away. As they did, he saw the

Commander's prone form on the ground. The wound was grave. Commander Alfred's chest was slashed open diagonally, and he was beyond help.

Despite that, when he saw Crowley, he made the effort to smile. "You're here, Crowley."

"Yes, sir."

"It tires me out to speak loudly, so come closer."

"Of course, sir."

Crowley approached the Commander's side, as ordered. When he did, the Commander clasped Crowley's hand in his own and pulled him to himself. The grip was still strong, and Crowley felt relieved just a little.

The Commander spoke up, "I'm sorry you have to see me like this."

"Please don't be, sir."

"Don't make that face. You're doing good."

"...No, I am not, sir, at all. I could not uphold the order you gave me, Commander."

"Order? What did I order you?"

"...To slay as many enemies as I can and protect our comrades. But I have failed and let so many of our comrades die."

"Fool. That's my responsibility, not yours. I'm the Commander of this unit."

"..."

"You really are doing great, believe me. If not for you, we would've been wiped out numerous times already. Do you know what the other knights and soldiers are calling you?"

Crowley shook his head. He only knew that the enemies called him Devil.

The Commander continued, "Hero. They're calling you a hero. Because you're always first on the frontlines, slaying more enemies and protecting more comrades than anyone else. All the knights here had their lives saved by you."

"But..."

"Shut up. I'm not asking your opinion."

"..."

"I'm proud of you. Among all the knights I have reared, you are by far the finest. I'm so glad that you will still be left even when I'm gone," the Commander said.

So what Gustavo said about the Commander praising him was true.

Crowley squeezed the Commander's hand tighter. "...No, please do not praise me so much, sir. I still want you to train and guide me when we are back."

But the Commander only looked at him with a troubled face.

"I still can't get by without you, Commander."

The Commander reached out and patted his head gently.

"Fool. You already are, and so good that you're even being called a hero. A man like that shouldn't cry."

"...But..."

He didn't finish because the Commander coughed up blood at that moment. It was of hideous, black, color, and there was a lot of it. Crowley felt the Commander's body weakening by the second.

He was going to die. His Commander was going to die.

The Commander still continued, "Crowley, I have my last order for you."

He should have said something, acknowledged the Commander's words, but his voice failed him. He couldn't force out any reply. Tears started falling, and if he tried to speak, his voice would come out weak and trembling, he knew.

The Commander said, "I order you: don't you die here, no matter what."

"..."

"You have a future. You are always calm and composed, talented in swordfighting and also popular. You are someone who is to stand at the top of this Order someday. That's why you mustn't die at a place like this," the Commander asserted.

"...But I was taught that dying in war is where the true honor for a knight lies in," Crowley expressed.

"Protecting his comrades is the honor for a knight."

"..."

"Besides, this is no longer war. It's suicide. I can't let my people keep getting killed in this absurd battle any longer," the Commander stated and grabbed Crowley by the shoulders. "That's why, Crowley... I'm entrusting this to you... the comrades... keep them alive and... back home..."

Before Commander Alfred could finish his request, his arms lost strength. Limply, they dropped to the ground.

Their Commander couldn't make it back home, in the end.

Holding the dead body of his Commander in his arms, Crowley looked down.

"..." Not even gritting his teeth in desperation could stop the tears that kept rolling down his cheeks. He was already doing everything he could just to stop himself from sobbing and weeping.

He had been learning the swordsmanship from the Commander since he was 17. This person taught him everything a knight needed to know.

And now he was dead. His mentor was dead.

And, to make it even worse, in this completely meaningless war.

This... this he couldn't forgive, would never be able to forgive.

If God really saw this, if He really watched every person's actions in everyday life, then He should have known for a fact that the Commander wasn't someone who was supposed to die here. If so, then what for did he, did all of them fight here? What for, when God wasn't even watching...?

Someone touched Crowley's shoulder gently. It was Victor. He, too, looked sad and trying to choke back his tears.

Crowley forced out, "...The Commander..."

"Yeah."

"The Commander is dead."

"Yeah, I know."

"What am I supposed to do now...?"

To that, Victor replied, "Just be your usual self. It's your usual self that the Commander believed in and trusted."

His usual self. Crowley touched the rosary on his neck. As if to beseech God for help. As if to pray to God who wouldn't land His ear.

For a while, Crowley didn't move. But he knew that he couldn't stay here forever. But for a little while. For just a little while longer. To give himself a bit of time, so short that the dead Commander in his arms wouldn't get angry at him, to grieve and accept this loss.

1 second. 2 seconds. 3 seconds.

The next moment saw Crowley raising his head again. He wiped his eyes, wet from tears, with his hand. Tearing off the rosary of the Commander's neck, he put it in his pocket. Then he put the Commander's body on the ground and stood up.

When he did, it was Gilbert who spoke up first from behind him. "Crowley-sama. What do we do now, sir?"

Crowley turned around. His eyes landed on the group of knights, his comrades, gathered there. And behind them, there were ordinary soldiers waiting, as well.

But the numbers had dwindled. In the chaotic and disorganized battle earlier, they got separated, with their unit scattered all across the battlefield, so he had no idea how many of their comrades they had actually lost by now.

But still, the 70-something people here had survived. Among them, was Gilbert. And Victor. And Gustavo. And Rosso the squire. The other knights, as well as the soldiers following them, all were looking at Crowley expectantly.

Surveying them, he tried whispering almost inaudibly, "...Keep the comrades alive and return back home..."

And these words made him feel a wave of dread.

They were in the middle of the enemy positions, with no reinforcements coming. In all honesty, that order looked impossible to execute. Still, they needed to make haste. "..."

Just then, Victor spoke up. "It's alright. I'll help you."

Gustavo spoke up as well, "I will, as well. It's vexing to be bossed around by my junior, but such is the Commander's order."

The other high ranking knights seemed to have no objection either.

Gilbert said, "Crowley-sama. Your orders, sir."

Crowley nodded and declared, "Men, retreat! We will retreat now, in order to come back to this land again later! Listen up! From now on, I will not allow anyone to die! We will protect each other and make it back home without fail! And then, we will build up our strength again and recover the Holy Land!"

In response to his shout, the knights let out a war cry.



If you thought the previous part was sad, get ready for the ocean of pain and suffering in this one. “Tragedy” is too weak a word for this.

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela by *Kagami Takaya*

Chapter 3 (part ¾) (volume 1, pages 174-206)

◆

Crowley’s memories of the next few days were very vague.

He only remembered that they kept walking day and night - so as not to get killed by the enemy, so as to get away somehow.

During that period, they were attacked numerous times, and each of those times they lost comrades. But despite the odds, they couldn’t possibly give up.

They would survive and return home.

Keep them all alive and return back home. This was their Commander’s last order, that’s why giving up was out of question.

“Ahh~ Crowley, lately, I keep seeing women in my sleep. What should I do?” Victor complained as he walked.

Crowley replied, “Don’t talk. You’re wasting your strength.”

But Victor didn’t listen. “We’ll tire out anyway, even if we walked with gloomy mugs.”

Crowley laughed. “We’re already dead tired though.”

“And that’s why we need to talk about women.”

"I'd rather have water than a woman right now though."

"Well, me, too~ But if we talk about water, we'll only get thirstier," Victor said.

He looked really exhausted. They were out of water and food. They all were weakened, hardly able to muster any strength anymore. They would probably be wiped out in the enemy's next attack.

But even so.

"There should be water when we reach Damietta," Crowley said.

Damietta was one of the enemy's strongholds and their most prominent military gain taken in the beginning of this Crusade. They sieged it and made it surrender.

Conquering that city should have been more than enough already. The enemy proposed a peace treaty. The kings of the countries participating in this war wanted to accept the peace offer. That alone was a big success already, they said.

And yet, just what was this mess they were in right now?

"..."

But thinking about it now wouldn't help anything. For now, they needed to reach Damietta; there, they would find plenty of allies, no doubt. And would be able to finally have some water. And...

"Just a little more," Crowley said.

From behind him, Gustavo spoke up, "Hey, Crowley."

"Yes?"

"Don't interrupt Victor."

"Huh? What are you talking about?"

"His women talk. I wanna hear that, so don't interrupt. I'm so hungry that if I don't, my legs just may stop moving," Gustavo stated.

Victor made a triumphant face at Crowley. The other high ranking knights also nodded, seconding Gustavo's opinion.

"Did you people ever hear of the chastity oath?" Crowley turned to look at them over his shoulder with an exasperated look.

The one to answer him was, predictably, Gustavo. "I'll think about it after I did a chick or two."

"Good grief."

"Alright, Victor. Start talking."

Victor nodded and began to speak. "Well~, lemme tell you about something that happened on a summer night last year. I was with a girl named Claudia, and she was the type who just couldn't keep her mouth shut to save her life. So, that girl said that she dated a knight before."

Gustavo interrupted him, "Oh. That knight, don't tell me he was one of the Templars?"

"Uh-huh. "Are you sure?" I asked her, and she confirmed, "Yes, I am!" To boot, the guy was a hell of a pervert, who liked talking like a child in front of women and get spanked by them."

"Hey, seriously?! Did you get his name out of her?"

"Yup, and, check this out, it was Crowley Something-Or-Other," Victor divulged something as ridiculous as that.

He was making this story up as he went, no doubt. But the knights laughed at it. It was a quiet sound - they didn't have any strength left to laugh loudly.

Gustavo asked Crowley, "Hey, is that true, Crowley?"

Crowley gave him a weary smile. "Aah, that Claudia, huh. She talked about Victor a lot with me. That he can't get it up with women."

"Hey!" Victor punched him in the shoulder.

That caused another burst of laughter. This time, the laughter felt more real. Probably because Damietta was close.

When they had decided to retreat, it was 70 of them there, but now only 45 were left. Still, it meant that 45 people could come back alive. Would the Commander praise him for this?

"I can see it!" one of the soldiers yelled. Crowley raised his head.

Indeed, he could see the fortifications far away, at long last. Around the city of Damietta, there were walls. He recalled how much trouble it was to break through them, but right now those walls looked reassuring.

And it wasn't likely for the enemy to pursue them anymore. Inside the walls of Damietta, there should be plenty of Crusaders still left.

"Castle walls!"

"Damietta in sight!" the soldiers shouted.

A little more. Just a little more.

But just when Crowley thought this, his ears picked up a sound coming from behind. The sound much like that of earth rumbling, along with words in a foreign language and the voices of the pursuers.

"Damn!" Crowley spun around. They weren't close yet, but the pursuing party was the biggest Crowley and his comrades had faced so far. And they were mounted. So they would catch up before long.

Gustavo screamed, "You gotta be kidding me! This can't be happening, not when we're so close!"

Crowley immediately ordered his comrades, "Run! Run for your life!"

But he himself didn't move. Turning in the direction of the pursuers, he unsheathed his sword.

Next to him, Victor asked, "Hey, Crowley, just what are you planning to do?"

"We won't be able to get away from them like that. So I'm gonna cover up our rear."

"You'll die."

"I promised the Commander to protect our comrades."

"The Commander said to you not to die no matter what! So you go to the vanguard. I'll bring up our rear!" With this, Victor also drew his sword.

When he did, as if in response to his words, Gustavo and the other high ranking knights also unsheathed theirs. 10 people in total. Even with a place to run to in sight, there still were more than 10 people among them who chose to risk their lives for the sake of protecting their comrades.

Gilbert stood in front of Crowley last. "Then, I, too, shall..." he said, about to draw his blade as well, but Crowley's hand coming to rest on the handle of Gilbert's sword, stopping him.

Crowley ordered, "No, not you, Gilbert. Our remaining comrades need someone to lead them."

"Wha, please do not joke like that! This is where I will die."

"No, it's not. Protect our comrade and make it to Damietta."

"No. That is your duty, sir. I shall stay here and—"

But just then, Crowley punched him in the face.

“Ghah!”

“Listen up, Gilbert. A highly capable knight is needed to lead our remaining comrades. And that knight is you.”

“No, Crowley-sama, that role is yours.”

“You will do it. This is an order. Or are you saying you won’t listen to your senior’s orders?”

“...Ugh.” Gilbert fell silent.

Grabbing him by the shoulders, Crowley assured him, “Besides, I don’t intent to die here either. The Commander ordered me to survive no matter what. So I - we - will survive.”

Gilbert, on the verge of tears, looked at him. “...Really?”

“Really. We’ll act as a decoy, then escape. So you guys, too, gotta make it to the walls in the meantime. Once you do, bring reinforcements from the Crusaders in Damietta.”

For a moment, Gilbert had a pensive expression on his face, but soon nodded. “Understood, sir. But afterwards, we will join back up with you, without fail.”

“Sure.”

“Without fail!”

“I believe you. Alright, let’s get started. You guys go.”

In response to that, Gilbert raised his hand. “Men, follow me! We’re going to call reinforcements from Damietta!” With that, he broke into a run.

Once Crowley confirmed that, he shifted his attention to the enemy behind them once again. They were fast approaching. There seemed to be about a hundred of them.

There was no way for the ten-odd exhausted knights to win this. But they still needed to play their part convincingly in order to divert the enemy’s attention from Gilbert and his group.

That’s why Crowley said to the rest, “We’ll charge them.”

Next to him, Gustavo commented, “Then we really are gonna be dying here, huh? Ahh, how lousy. Maybe I should’ve gone with Gilbert after all.”

Except Crowley knew for a fact that, for all of his biting words, Gustavo was the first one to unsheathe his sword. He was always that kind of man. A man who would never abandon his comrades.

And next to him, there stood, trembling from fear with his whole body, Rosso the squire. He stayed behind, too.

The rest also were the knights that were friends with Crowley. The comrades he trained, shared meals and lodging with.

Victor shouted loudly, making an abrupt request, “Hey, guys! Tell the rest of us what will you do first thing when we return!”

One after another the knights started replying.

“Meat! I’ll eat lots of meat!”

“I’ll go to women, of course!”

“Booze for me! No, water! Water first!”

Victor said with a laugh, “Oh guys, you’re completely tainted with mundane lusts! Our Lord won’t save you if you’re like that!”

That made all of them burst out laughing. And somehow, it made them feel that they wanted to survive and return, after all.

Victor looked at Crowley. “Okay then, my job is done,” he said. He probably still followed that order the Commander gave him, about cheering up his comrades with his optimism. “I’m leaving the rest to you, Crowley,” he continued.

"Alright then, let's all return alive! And for that, we'll engage those pagans' attention, then run. Make your swords sing! Roar with the war cry! Do everything you can to be flashy. But don't forget that this is only a decoy mission! The goal is already in sight. So survive with all the stubbornness you can muster and show the enemy our strength as the Knights Templar! Men, chaaaaaaaarge!"

"Yeaaaaaaaah!!!"

Letting out a deafening cry, the knights banged their swords against their armor or shields and, making as much noise as possible, broke into a run. Towards the enemy. Towards the pagans.

Charging them head-on would only result in the crusaders getting wiped out in an instant. That's why they were going to stop just in front of the enemy and make the pagans come chase after them.

Then slay them starting with those who would catch up.

Slay. Slay.

"Slaughter theeeeeem!!!" Crowley roared.

He beheaded the enemy in front of him. Looped off the arm of another one. Then struck with his sword the head of a man who was about to attack Victor next to him. The man's skull got smashed, making his sword plunge in too deep and get stuck. "Ugh."

Using the opening, 5 enemies attacked him from the side. Gustavo and Rosso swooped down on one of them.

"Crowley!"

"Crowley-sama!"

Gustavo promptly beheaded 2 others. His senior really was strong.

But Rosso lost the power struggle. He caught the enemy's sword with his own but, unable to properly stop the momentum, allowed the blade to plunge into his neck. It made a damnable squelching noise as it did. A spray of blood gushed out of Rosso's neck.

"Rosso!" Crowley swept up Rosso's fallen sword from the ground and thrust it right through the heart of the man who cut down the squire.

"Kh-Crowley-sama... Are you alright, sir?" Covered in his own blood, Rosso was still worried about him.

"Yeah. Yeah, I am. Thanks to you. You saved me."

At that, the squire, a boy, who barely turned 16, forced out a happily sounding, "Th-Thanks G..." And that was where he breathed his last.

Yet another pure young boy with a future died saving him. Crowley scowled, but he couldn't afford to stop here.

Leaving Rosso's body behind, he ordered, "Retreat! Men, retreat!"

They broke into a run. Needless to say, the enemy gave chase. The knights ran with all they had, cutting down the enemies when they were catching up with them.

Behind him, Crowley could hear his comrades' short screams and choking sounds he was all too familiar with.

His comrades were being killed one after another. But he didn't have any time to spare to look back at this point. Making a desperate escape was all he could do. If he didn't, they would all be killed.

"You daaaaaaaaamn!!!" Gustavo's shout came from behind him.

When Crowley heard it, he looked back before he could stop himself. And found an enemy soldier right behind him. The man's sword was raised over his head, ready to strike Crowley down, but he apparently didn't expect Crowley to look back and paused with a surprised look on his face when Crowley did. Crowley's sword cut that face clean off. He really had been saved by Gustavo's shout just then.

But said Gustavo was being left behind right in the middle of the enemies. Left hand holding his stomach, with his intestines hanging out from it, he shouted, "Men, everybody, run! I'll hold off the pagans here!"

Impossible. There was no way he could.

Gustavo would die. Here.

And yet, Gustavo himself wasn't scared of dying.

"Hey, Crowley!" he called Crowley's name instead. "Make sure you all escape alive!" Gustavo shouted to him.

The enemies unhurriedly gathered around him, surrounding him, and raised their swords.

"Gustavo-senpai!" Crowley cried out, and in that instance, Gustavo raised his own sword and penetrated into the thick of the pagans. They swarmed Gustavo, but he still managed to kill several of them.

"Uwoooooooooah!" Gustavo screamed.

But that was as far as his resistance lasted. A number of swords pierced Gustavo's neck, torso, abdomen. But he still swung his sword. Gustavo desperately swung his sword at an empty space, but very soon his arm weakened, too, unable to move anymore.

Crowley could only watch. "...Damn," he sobbed. "...Damn, damn, damn it all!"

What was this. Just what was this?!

Fury welled up in him, making his whole body tremble. But he didn't know anymore who he should vent this rage on. On the pagans? On the top brass that forced this meaningless war? Or on God who didn't protect them at all even though they believed in Him so much?

Victor grabbed him by the hand. "Don't space out! We're still alive! So let's run!"

"..."

"Come on, quick!"

With a scream, Crowley broke into a run again. He ran desperately, slaying the enemies in his path and leading his comrades.

There wasn't even any time to check how many of them were still alive. But he needed to survive. He needed to survive no matter what.

The Commander ordered him to. He said to survive and come back home. Crowley was ordered to take his comrades back home.

That's why Crowley ran with everything he had.

Ran. And ran.

"..."

Before they even realized it, they managed to get clear away. There was no sight of the enemies pursuing them

anymore.

Crowley had no idea for how long they ran.

“...Huff, huff, huff,” he could only breathe hard, with his shoulders heaving. He tried to get his breathing under control, but it just wouldn’t calm down. He pressed a hand to his own chest. His heart pounded at an incredible speed. But still, despite that, they...

“...We... survived?” Crowley whispered and looked over his shoulder.

His comrades, who could keep up, were behind him. 7 of them in total.

10-something people took on a hundred of enemies, and 7 survived. A half, then. The other half had died, but still, that many of them surviving was nothing short of a miracle.

Everyone was looking at him. And they all were smiling. No one could speak - they had no strength left to. But they all were smiling. At their miraculous survival. At their unbelievable luck.

Someone said, “O Lord...”

And a few others, one after another, looked up to the sky and started to pray.

Crowley gazed at the scene. At his comrades, praying to God.

From the side, Victor grabbed his shoulder. Shifting his eyes to the side, Crowley found him still alive and also smiling. As he gazed at that smiling face of Victor’s, only then the realization that he wasn’t dead either started to sink in Crowley’s mind at last.

“Hahaha,” he inadvertently ended up laughing.

Damietta should be within an arm’s reach already. Not to mention that Gilbert with reinforcements would show up any moment now.

It looked like they really were saved. They managed to come out of that hopeless situation alive.

“Hey, we did it,” Victor said. “Crowley, you’ve saved everyone.”

But Crowley shook his head. “...No, it’s thanks to everyone’s efforts and sacrifices: the Commander’s, Rosso’s, Gustavo-senpai’s...”

And not just them. Their numerous dead comrades had fulfilled their mission. They might have lost the war, but everyone died with honor. He saw it with his own eyes: how they sacrificed themselves to protect their comrades, to preserve their honor.

It was because of those sacrifices that he and his comrades were alive - those ten-odd that Gilbert led and the seven beside Crowley right now.

And among them, even his best friend still remained.

Lifting his head, Crowley gazed at him. At Victor. And although late, replied to Victor’s question from earlier, “...I’ll pray when we return.”

Victor made a confused face at him, and Crowley explained, “You asked what we would do first thing when we returned, didn’t you.”

“Ah, yes. I did.”

“And this is my answer: I’ll pray when we return. I’ll go to church and pray. And I’ll say to Our Lord that I’m grateful to

Him, even if He only smiled upon us once at the very end.”

Taking the Commander’s rosary out of his pocket, Crowley clutched it in his hand tightly and looked up at the sky like the rest.

“O Lord...” he said.

Seeing that, Victor smiled. “Let’s go back. To our home.”

“Yeah,” Crowley nodded.

He was about to order his comrades to muster the last of their strength and march to Damietta, but just then he discovered something strange in the direction where Damietta lay. “...”

From there, a lone man dressed in black was slowly approaching right through the wasteland. The man had tanned skin, so he probably was a pagan. But he was unarmed. Empty-handed, he was staring intently at them.

“What’s that?” The other knights must have noticed him, too.

“An enemy? Did he follow us?”

“Even if he did, there’s no one else around. What can he do all alone?”

“Maybe he got separated from his comrades?”

“If so, then why isn’t he running away? He’s coming straight this way.”

Crowley interjected, “Guys, be quiet for a bit.”

Everyone fell silent. Crowley, on high alert, put his hand on the handle of his sword and asked in a loud voice, “Hey, you! Who are you?”

“...” The man didn’t answer. Just kept coming closer, straight for them.

“Hey!”

“...”

“Hey! Do you understand our language?”

“...”

“Don’t come any closer. If you do, I’ll kill you!” Crowley unsheathed his sword.

His comrades did the same in perfect synch.

The man raised his head.

He was a bizarrely beautiful man. And his eyes were red. Red like blood. Showing his white teeth, the man smiled. In his mouth, there were two sharp pointed fangs, like those of a beast.

“What the heck.” The moment the words left Victor’s mouth, the black-clad man disappeared.

“Eh...?”

“Uwah?!”

The following moment, these screams resounded from behind Crowley. When Crowley spun around, two of his comrades had already been dead.

With his left hand, the man snapped the neck of one of them and had his right hand through the chest of the other.

Their death was instant. They slumped, not moving.

“What the heck, what is he?!” the knights screamed.

Crowley was just as confused. The man’s movements were clearly not something a human was capable of. It was hard to believe that anyone could move so fast as to instantly disappear out of sight. There was something very wrong with this guy.

“Y-You bastaaaard!!!” Another one of the knights raised his sword, about to strike the man down, and Crowley cried out, “Don’t!!!”

This man wasn’t an opponent any of them could take on alone and hope to win.

But it was too late. The blade almost reached the man’s neck, when the man stopped it with just two fingers.

“Wha?!”

Immediately following the knight’s cry of astonishment, the man twisted his fingers. And just like that, the blade broke easily, snapping like it was a thin stick.

“Hey, that’s gotta be a joke,” Victor, standing next to Crowley, uttered in a frightened voice.

But it was no joke. What they were witnessing wasn’t a dream.

A monster.

Something that wasn’t human, a being that was something else entirely was attacking them. And they weren’t taught how to fight a monster that could move like that.

The man waved his left hand lightly. As he did, the head of the knight whose sword the man had just broken, got separated from the rest of his body, flying across the space.

Then the man spoke up, “...So weak. I don’t like the blood of weaklings. Isn’t there anyone stronger?”

Crowley shouted, “Gather together! Don’t fight him alone! We’ll deal with this monster as a united f—”

However, just then, the man turned to him, remarking, “Ahh, so you must be the strongest among them?”

He disappeared again and in the next moment was already standing right in front of Crowley.

“Khugh...” As the man’s hand was about to reach for Crowley’s neck, “Uooooogh!” he raised his sword and swung it, aiming for the monster’s head. A hit from the monster’s hand snapped the sword in two effortlessly.

But Crowley had already expected this much. He was prepared, and he swung his sword with that in mind.

He shoved the remaining blade of the broken sword forward, trying to push it into the monster’s neck. The monster’s eyes widened slightly, but he dodged the attack.

“Oops, you’re really not half-bad. But a sword like yours against me is— ”

Crowley, however, had already cast away said sword and, tackling the monster, bodily pushed him to the ground, shouting at the same time, “Victor, kill hiiiiim!!!”

At that, Victor and the other knights stabbed the monster with their swords all at once. 4 swords pierced the monster’s body.

They killed him. They were able to kill him.

Or so Crowley thought.

But the man grinned, “And?” Despite the 4 blades lodged in him, he looked calm as ever.

He wasn’t human, after all. This thing wasn’t human.

Which meant, they had no chance to win anymore.

If this monster didn't die from being impaled with swords, then Crowley had no idea how to kill him.

It was all over. They could only try to escape. That's why...

"Hey, Victor!" Take everyone and run, Crowley was about to order.

But before he could, the monster laughed, "I don't think so. I'm not letting you get away. Witnesses are to be slaughtered. I will leave you for the main dish, so wait here for a bit."

Spinning around, Crowley wanted to shout, "Run!" to the others, but by the time he turned around, the monster that he was holding down just a moment ago, already appeared right next to his comrades. Grabbing one by the head, he snapped his neck. Driving a hand into the chest of another, he gouged out the heart.

"Stop," Crowley squeezed out, watching his comrades being killed. "Please stop!!!" he screamed.

Why was this happening. Just when they thought they had survived. Just when they made it this far, paying so dearly for it. Just when the city, Damietta, was already in sight.

They were supposed to make it back. They were supposed to return home alive.

And yet, just what was he watching unfold here.

Another one of his comrades got killed. The comrade that was supposed to return home alive got killed.

And now the monster was looking at Victor.

Victor raised his sword.

"Don't! Victor!" Crowley screamed. But that scream was meaningless.

The man waved his hand. And that alone was enough to loop off Victor's arm and launch it flying in the air.

"Ah..." was all Victor said. Then he looked at Crowley. With a face asking what he should do now, imploring for help. And Crowley was about to rush to him.

"Stay away!" Victor stopped him.

The same moment the words left his mouth, the man latched onto Victor's neck. Those long sharp fangs pierced deeply into the flesh, and the man started sucking something out with wet sounds. Then his throat moved to swallow with a gulp. It appeared he drank the blood.

He was a bloodsucking monster.

"Ah, ah, ah..." Victor grunted, and then his body was dropped to the ground unceremoniously. And then he died.

So easily, too.

Victor did.

The friend Crowley had always been together with ever since he had joined the Knights Templar died.

And Crowley was watching him to vacantly.

Seeing God who had never once smiled upon them in the end. With a vacant look, he was watching the cruel God who, on top of everything they had gone through, even sicked a bloodsucking monster on them.

Said monster grabbed Crowley by the neck and forced him to his feet. But there was no strength left anywhere in Crowley's body anymore for anything. It was like any energy to get up and any will to live he might have had had been sucked out dry.

The man said, "I kept you waiting. But now, I will suck your blood."

With empty eyes, Crowley gazed at the man. He felt no fear anymore. If this world was so completely devoid of God's love, then he didn't see any point in living any longer.

That's why he said, "...Kill me."

At that, the man made a mildly bored face. "I don't enjoy sucking the blood of unresisting humans. Human blood is at its most delicious when it's filled with fury."

Crowley thought he couldn't care less. He didn't know what this creature was, but he just couldn't care less anymore, about anything.

The man opened his mouth. In it, a pair of fangs was prominent. Those fangs sunk into his neck. He felt as if his life was being sucked out noisily from within him. For some reason, there was something like immense pleasure in having life sucked out of him, in feeling death approach.

"Ah, ah..." his voice leaked out by itself. His pupils dilated.

The sky and the sun looked so terribly dazzling - from this place drenched in blood. And as if it wasn't enough, the sky above this spot where his comrades had been killed just when he had thought they had managed to survive was so blue and beautiful...

"...Aah, I know. This is a dream."

It was too ridiculous not to be, Crowley mused. So it must have been a dream. A monster like this couldn't possibly exit, after all.

In reality, they lost and were killed on that battlefield. And this was a dream he ended up seeing on the verge of dying.

No, could this be a dream that he had because he was too scared to go to that war? A nightmare he saw after partying with everyone and drinking too much in that dining hall. If it was, then he wanted to wake up from it soon.

And once he did, Victor would say something ridiculous to him again. And Gustavo would be his usual sourpuss self, and Rosso, Commander Alfred, and the rest of his comrades would laugh like usual.

Ahh, how nice would it be if it was true. How much he wanted it to be true.

Crowley's consciousness was fading, growing more distant by the second.

And from somewhere very far away, he heard voices. In a distant dream, vaguely, he could hear someone talking.

Were those the voices of angels? Or of demons from Hell?

◆ ◆

"...Now, wait, don't kill him, Raux..."

"...Huh? What are you bastard doing here?"

"Ahaah~ Now, now, that aside, he is Michaela. And that's why..."

"..."

“That’s why... I won’t let you kill him.”

T/N: The name of that vampire, ㄣ —, has too many possible spellings (like Rau, Lau, Raux, Roe, Lo, Lowe and many more), I’m going with the variant I like the most for now (Raux), but if we ever get an official mention or clearer English spelling of his name (like, judging by the way he talks to Ferid and the way Ferid addresses him, there is a possibility that he might turn out to be one of the higher ranking progenitors), it will be a subject to chance.



The last part of chapter 3, and with this, the volume is essentially finished.

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela by *Kagami Takaya*

Chapter 3 (part 4/4) (volume 1, pages 207-230)

◆◆◆◆

“...se.”

He heard a voice again. But this time, it was much clearer than previously.

“...Wake up, open your eyes, please, Crowley-sama! Crowley-sama!”

Crowley frowned at the voice.

“...Nh.” With a quiet groan, he opened his eyes.

The sunlight was too blinding. And his head ached terribly. So it looked like he fell asleep.

When his eyes opened, he found Gilbert watching him intently.

“Th-Thanks God you are alive! Hey, everybody, Crowley-sama came to!”

Then Crowley heard more voices. The voices of his comrades.

“R-Really?!”

“Is he OK?!”

Relieved exclamations like that all around.

Ahh, his comrades were alive, he thought. Then all of that really was a dream. That monster was nothing but a dream.

Looking up at Gilbert, Crowley said, "...Gilbert."

"Yes, sir?"

"...I had a really bad dream."

"That bad dream is now over!"

"It really was awful. In it, the Commander died, and Gustavo-senpai, too, and even Victor was killed by some bizarre monster..."

"...Crowley-sama. Please, please do not talk any more. You are so pale. And you are bleeding profusely."

"No, I'm OK. I'm awake now... so I'll be on my feet in a moment."

Crowley sat up, as if to wake up from the nightmare and get away from it, only for his eyes to widen a moment later.

Because he was in the same place. The place from where Damietta was only a short distance away. And where the sea of blood was all around him.

His comrades' blood stained the ground, and that was where he was apparently lying, right in the middle of the pool of it.

In front of him, Victor lay collapsed.

He was dead, with his face turned to Crowley, as if asking for help. A step away from his body, there was a fallen rosary. The Commander's rosary.

Only, that rosary didn't protect anyone in the end. The one to come for them wasn't God. Only Devil.

Crowley stared at it. "..."

With his eyes fixed on it, he said, "Enough. I'm fed up with all of this. I have no use for this nightmare."

"Crowley-sama."

"Enough with the stupid antics. Just what is this! What is this, I'm asking! Just what are You even trying to do?! For what sins are You meting out this punishment?!" Crowley screamed.

But no reply came. The sky was still blue and clear as ever, and no answer from God was forthcoming.

Gilbert picked up the Commander's rosary and begged, "Crowley-sama, please calm down."

"Be quiet."

"Our Lord, God exists."

"Be quiet, shut up!"

"And He kept you alive, sir. It is His way of saying that you need to live—"

"Shut up, shut up, shut up! Just shut the hell up already!!!" Crowley yelled.

That did shut Gilbert up.

Crowley got up. Slowly, he made his way to Victor's side and fell down to his knees there. Extending a hand, very gently he closed Victor's still open eyes. Victor's body was still warm. But there was no life in it. Victor wouldn't laugh anymore. Wouldn't say anything silly either. Wouldn't wake up ever again.

"...I'm sorry, Victor. By some ugly twist, I'm the only one who is still disgracefully alive."

From behind him, Gilbert spoke up again, "No, Crowley-sama. Thanks to you, many knights were saved."

"..."

"You are a knight, chosen by God."

Chosen by God, he said. But it just didn't seem that way, no matter how he looked at it. There was no way he was loved by God. On the contrary, he even felt that God was disappearing from his heart, fading away with each passing second.

Despite that, he still said, "...Gilbert."

"Yes, sir?"

"Tell everyone to pray for Victor and the others. So that in Kingdom of Heaven they will be loved by God and able to smile happily."

And then, Crowley himself prayed.

For Victor. For Gustavo. For Rosso. For the Commander.

Eyes closed, from the bottom of his heart he prayed to God, asking Him to grant peace to all of his fallen comrades...

And after that, he never prayed again.

◆ ◆ ◆

Ferid listened to Crowley talk with keen interest.

While Crowley was telling about his past, his goblet was refilled with wine multiple times, and he got fairly drunk, as he later reflected. And probably because of that, he felt that he ended up revealing even things that he didn't really have to.

For a while, Ferid looked pensive, gazing at him, then he said, "...In other words, you did see a bloodsucking monster during the war?"

Crowley nodded. "...Yeah. But well, driven into a corner as I was at the time, I wasn't exactly at my sanest, so it's possible that he was something like a dream or a hallucination my mind conjured."

"Maybe, but purely for argument's sake, let us assume that monster was real. What do you think he was?"

"No idea."

"Could he be the same fellow as the one behind this time's murders?" With that, Ferid put the hollow silver needle on the table.

Crowley studied it with his eyes. The monster he had seen back during the war didn't resort to this kind of tricks. No, he didn't need to in the first place. After all, he was a real monster, so fast that it was impossible to even track his movements.

That's why Crowley answered, "No, it's not him, I think."

"What makes you think that?" Ferid asked in a wondering tone.

"That guy had to be a hallucination, in the end. There is no way a monster like that can exist."

"You never know. The world is full of all kinds of monsters."

"Then, have you seen some different kind of monster yourself?"

"I have. For example, a monster that sends you a fat old hag when what you asked for was a cute young girl."

"That's so not the kind I'm talking about."

"Hahaha," Ferid laughed mirthfully.

Taking the needle again, he started playing with it, rolling it in his fingers.

"So, since then, you distanced yourself from the Knights Templar?"

"..."

"Did you lose your faith?"

That question made Crowley speak up. "Don't tell me you're an Inquisitor, and if I say yes to that inquiry, I'll be rewarded with the honor of burning at the stake as early as tomorrow?"

Ferid grinned at that. "That's right. All non-believers are to be slain. Now, tell me what heat level would you prefer?"

"I don't want to die by burning. It looks pretty painful. If you want to kill me, do it by decapitating me."

"Well, if I were an Inquisitor, I would allow fornication, devil worshiping, immorality - everything! - and make the world easier to live in," Ferid chuckled with delight.

Well, that sealed it then. There was no way someone who lived in a mansion of glaring perversion like this one could be an Inquisitor.

Crowley asked, "Do you not believe in God, yourself?"

"I wonder. At the very least, I haven't seen Him. Have you?"

"No."

"But you did see a vampire, huh."

"..."

"And lost your faith."

Crowley's hand made a motion to reach for the rosary on his neck, but, remembering that Ferid was watching, he consciously stopped the movement.

However, it appeared that Ferid noticed anyway. He was looking at Crowley with a broad grin.

Silence lasted for a while. Perhaps, the talk exhausted them both. And it was growing really late now, too.

"Well then, I'll be on my way now," Crowley informed the host.

But Ferid protested, "I cannot have that. I wanted to have you stay over tonight. A room for you has already been prepared. Girls, too."

Crowley chuckled and shook his head, then stood up. "Making so much trouble for you won't do. Besides, we only just met today."

"Your squire is already in my care for the night though?"

"And I apologize for that. I'll be counting on you to take care of him."

"Hmph. Not that I mind." With that, Ferid also stood up and saw Crowley to the door.

When the door opened, it was already pitch dark outside. Ferid had a lantern provided for Crowley.

"I will come to take it back tomorrow."

"Do you even know where I live?"

"I will ask Jose-kun."

"I see. Then, I will see you tomorrow."

"Mn-hm. Till tomorrow. Oh, and Crowley-kun."

"What?"

"I really enjoyed our conversation tonight," Ferid suddenly stated.

Crowley acknowledged him with a nod. Indeed, he felt that he, too, enjoyed it. He had experienced that emotion for the first time since he had returned from that war. To begin with, this was the first time he had a talk with anyone about those days.

So he replied, "Yeah, me, too."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

"That is good to hear. Well then, be careful walking the streets at night, don't get attacked by a vampire."

"If I see one, I'll vanquish it."

"Ahaha."

"Well, bye then."

"Yes, see you."

With that, Crowley left Ferid's mansion.

◆◆◆

The next morning, Crowley slept in.

"Sensei! Crowley-sensei! Please wake up!"

"Hm?"

"Everybody is already here."

It was his students, gathered for the sword practice, who woke him up. Not completely awake yet and rubbing his eyes, Crowley exited to the practice grounds and found the students already standing there in a row.

Josef, so rebellious yesterday, was standing at attention in the front. Looking at Crowley with shining eyes, he fired away, "I-I apologize for my rudeness yesterday! Please allow me to study under you again starting today!"

Crowley let out a wry smile at that and began the sword practice session. But then again, the basics were the foundation of everything. So after showing his pupils basic stances and moves, he had them practice them. The same way the Commander taught him in the past.

All the students were incomparably more fired up about it than yesterday, so Crowley found himself wanting to teach them a little more earnestly.

But just then, something got in his way.

"Hello, hello, Crowley-kun," Ferid's voice came. "Working hard, I see~" he said, watching Crowley's students.

His appearance made the students pause in their movements, and Crowley ordered them to go on.

Ferid walked up to him. Trying to copy what the students were doing, Ferid took a stance as if to swing a sword.

"Like this?" he asked.

"No, not even close," Crowley informed him.

"Oh? No good, huh?"

"No good at all. You're bending your back too much."

"Ahaha, no good then, eh? Alright, how about I ask you to give me private lessons in that case?"

"You're not even serious about learning. And it's not like you need it anyway. With your excessive wealth, you can just hire as many bodyguards as you want."

"Yes, that is true. In that case, I wish to hire you. After all, we will have to go vanquish oh-so-scary vampire shortly after this. You will go visit a few chasers with me in the afternoon, won't you?"

But when Ferid said that, Crowley looked away from him, shifting his eyes to the students practicing stances and swings, and said, "Well, about that, Ferid-kun. I think I'll pass, after all."

"Oh? Why is that?"

"I may not look it, but I'm fairly busy, you see."

"So busy that you overslept?"

"Huh? So you saw that?"

"I did."

"Well, yes, I did oversleep, but I'm still busy with quite a few things," Crowley said.

Despite getting a refusal, Ferid smiled, eyes riveted to Crowley's pupils. For a while, he just watched them practice, but then said, "So, what is your true reason?"

"...Ridiculous beings like vampires don't exist," was Crowley's answer.

Focusing his attention on Crowley, Ferid guessed, "Did you lose interest because the one behind the killings is clearly not the same fellow as the one you saw during the war?"

"...The one from the war is also a twisted dream or a hallucination of mine."

"I have to wonder about that. It seemed to me that for a hallucination, your story about him was far too lucid and well-detailed."

"I was drunk and carried my silly story a little too far."

He had minor regrets about running his mouth, he had to admit. He revealed too much of what he really shouldn't have had. And besides, if the Inquisition actually caught wind of any of this, he would be killed.

"Anyway, I wash my hands of this case. And if you know what's good for you, you, too, had better leave it to the Knights Templar. They'll do something about it."

"No, wait, if this case has something to do with a real vampire—"

But Crowley interrupted him, "Out of question."

Ferid fell silent.

"So this is as far as our vampire annihilation tale goes?"

"Yeah."

"What about our relationship?"

"Do we even have any relationship to speak of? We only met yesterday, if you forgot."

At that, Ferid smiled with a sad little smile.

Just then, another voice cut in. "Crowley-sama!"

It belonged to Jose who was running to them frantically with a panicked expression on his face.

Did he come to apologize for getting drunk yesterday and spending the night with a girl in Ferid's mansion?

"How was Jose doing this morning?" Crowley asked Ferid, who was still standing next to him.

"He turned miserably white in the face when he learned that you left without him."

"Haha."

Jose really was rushing to apologize for that, then.

"Crowley-sama!" With another cry of his name, Jose came to a halt in front of Crowley. "E-Excuse me, Crowley-sama, it's..." he stammered out, gasping for breath, shoulders heaving.

Crowley reassured the frantic boy, "Calm down. Want some water?"

"N-No, u-um, i-it's, p-please hear me out."

"I will, so calm down. I'm not angry anyway. So you don't really need to apologize for anyth—"

But Jose didn't let him finish. "I-It's not about that, sir. Incident, there was another incident..." Jose forced out looking like he was about to break into tears.

"Incident? Just what on earth happened?"

"In the Knights Templar's quarters, Gilbert-sama was... Gilbert-sama was murdered."

"Wha?!"

"All, all of his blood was drawn out..."

This was the worst possible news.

Jose, on the verge of tears, said, "Crowley-sama. Everybody is waiting for you to return."

At that, Crowley lifted his head.



The quarters of the Knights Templar was in an uproar. It was only to be expected. Gilbert, a high ranking knight who was considered a candidate for the position of the next Master, was killed.

Crowley entered the quarters.

Everyone's heads immediately turned to him and they fell silent, opening the way for him.

Whether it was because they knew that Crowley and Gilbert were close or because they were simply astonished to see such a rare guest who hadn't visited the quarters at all since the war was uncertain.

Jose took Crowley to the quarters' prayer room. It was a chamber with a big Cross in it.

And that was where Gilbert died.

It happened again. A person who shouldn't have died, had. Gilbert was more earnest and more serious than anyone else, and he believed in God so much.

And yet, he died next to the Cross.

"...Gilbert," Crowley whispered his name, feeling devastated by the loss. Even though he thought he had lost faith, right then and there he was forced to realize that he still believed in God, still wished for God to at least protect this serious, talented and caring comrade of his if no one else.

But Gilbert still died.

He was killed in an grotesque way, right at the base of the name of God.

"...Damn it."

The body was left untouched for now. He probably should examine it then, to see if there were any leads left on it.

Bending down, Crowley kneeled down by Gilbert's side. Touching the soft golden locks gently, he slowly turned Gilbert's head his way. Gilbert's eyes were wide open. With a look of terror. Just what did he see right before his death?

It wasn't God, that much was certain.

"What was it that you saw in your last moments, Gilbert?"

There was no answer.

"Please tell me. If you do, I will avenge you."

But, of course, Gilbert didn't answer. He was dead.

On his neck, there were two wounds seemingly left by fangs. The imprints that almost looked like the marks made by a vampire biting into the neck. The bite marks that were on Victor's neck, too.

Crowley didn't know if they were left by the killer responsible for the prostitutes' murders, or by something else entirely.

But...

“ ... ”

A voice came from behind him. “Say, Crowley-kun...” It was the voice of Ferid who, not shy in the least, followed him here.

Stepping into the chamber, Ferid narrowed his almond-shaped eyes sharply, looking all around. “...I see. I see, I see. This is quite something,” he observed, oddly mirthful.

It seemed that he could perceive all kinds of things from the room alone. He was smart, and his observation ability was outstanding. He had probably figured out something that Crowley couldn't.

“Did you learn something?”

But Ferid only smiled, refusing to answer.

“Oh come on, Ferid-kun.”

“What is it, Crowley-kun?”

“If you figured out something, tell me.”

At that, Ferid gave him the broadest grin he could manage and said, “Well, I just don't feel like carelessly revealing anything to a stranger like you I only met yesterday.”

So he intended to repay in kind for Crowley's earlier words, it seemed. Did they wound him somehow?

Crowley couldn't help the bitter twist of his lips at how unfeeling Ferid was, blurting out something like that and not forgetting about petty grudges even in these circumstances.

“I'm not in the mood for these games right now, so stop with the harassing.”

Ferid grinned again. “Okay. I will save the harassing for later.”

“So, who did this?”

“Hm~ This is probably the result of a whole mix of many interwoven factors, so I cannot provide a short answer to that question. But that aside, what would you do if you knew?”

“Eh?”

“You quit our amusing vampire annihilation endeavor, didn't you? So it's not like you have to search for the culprit, if you ask me.”

“That's...”

Ferid took a few steps forward. Stopping in front of the Cross, he turned around to look Crowley's way. Light streaming from the dormer window illuminated the Cross and the bewitchingly smiling man, standing at its base. In a setting like that, he was a man who belonged in a picture. He gazed at Crowley with such an expression on his face that it was as if he already knew what Crowley's next thought would be and what it was that Crowley considered doing from now on - knew everything.

Eyes fixed on the Cross and the decadent hedonist standing at its base, Crowley caved, “...Agh, damn you. Alright. I was wrong. I'll do it.”

“Do what?”

“That vampire hunt of yours.”

Ferid grinned and asked, “Is that really how you invite someone you want to accompany you so much along?”

“You will tag along even if I don't formally invite you, no?”

Ferid laughed, “No, you will have to ask me properly, or I'm not coming.”

It sure didn't take him long to get the harassing reopened.

But Crowley knew that he needed Ferid's help if he wanted to solve this case. In order to pursue an abnormal

bloodsucking criminal like the one they were dealing with, the help of someone like Ferid who was not quite normal himself was necessary.

Besides, with the exception of Ferid, Crowley had never told anyone about the bloodsucker he had come across back during the war. Which meant he would need Ferid's assistance all the more. If, by some chance, monsters like vampires did exist, then to find them and take revenge, Crowley would need Ferid by his side.

As if sensing Crowley's state of mind, Ferid held out his white delicate hand and said, "Come on, ask me. Say, "Be with me"."

"..."

"And you should also apologize for your words about meeting only yesterday."

So those words apparently did hurt Ferid's feelings. Crowley smiled lopsidedly and stared at the offered hand.

"Alright, I'm asking you. Please come with me, Ferid Bathory."

Ferid replied with a smile, "Ahaa~ Okay. Oh boy, I really don't want to go, but it just cannot be helped, can it." He chuckled.

And this was how the vampire extermination had begun.



This is the Crowley-relevant part of Intermission. You can choose to read it now, or you can choose to read it later in order (see the bottom of this post for notes). The Ferrid-Mika-relevant part will be translated by [amethystoria](#).

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela by Kagami Takaya

Intermission

The Story That Follows Michaela (opening part) (volume 1, pages 231-234)

“Ahh, wait up, Crowley-kun. Can we put this talk on hold for a bit?” Ferid Bathory asked, raising a finger.

Silence enveloped the library.

Crowley’s eyes focused on the man he had known for 700 years. “Hm?”

Crowley Eusford lifted his head.

Back in those days, he was still pure, strong and handsome, still believed in God and was not a vampire.

These days though, he was a complete vampire from head to toe—

“What’s wrong?”

“I have a business to attend to.”

“A business. Hmph. Oh well, I’m not interested in taking trips down memory lane, myself, so I don’t mind.”

“No, no. Let me hear the rest of the story later tonight. The tale about how you fell low enough to become a vampire is my all-time favorite!”

“Hmph.”

Crowley nodded and took a book from the bookshelf next to him. That corner of the library was dedicated to the Bible. The copies of the Bible translated into all kinds of languages could be found there. The copy he took out was in Latin. He had long since lost his faith, but could it be that recounting the story of his past made him yearn for God again?

Opening the Bible, Crowley said, "Fine, then how about reminiscing about the past over a glass of wine tonight, like on that day?"

Ferid smiled and replied, "It would be nice to. But we cannot drink wine anymore."

Crowley took only one eye off the Bible to shoot Ferid a glance and inquired, "'We'? But weren't you drinking wine on that day?"

It was blood, of course. Ferid wondered how long it had been since he last drank wine.

Crowley meanwhile asked, "For how long have you been a vampire? If anything, I'm more interested to know how you ended up becoming a vampire."

"Are you interested in me?"

"I'm interested in learning how a pervert as big as you came into being. Even you weren't a vampire from the start, right?"

"Aha," Ferid laughed.

How he came into being. How he became a vampire. Even if he felt like talking about that, today's business took precedence.

In the end, both Crowley Eusford and Feid Bathory were only victims dragged into the tale of the name "Michaela"...

And today, he was going to meet face to face the boy carrying the name Mikaela. That's why...

"Well, we'll talk about it later tonight. I will even prepare some vintage wine for us."

"No, better make it blood, okay?"

Smiling at Crowley's words, Ferid left the library.

Notes: To clarify the structure of the novel a bit. It covers 3 main time periods:

A. Almost-present, about 5-6 years before the current time in the manga

B. Crowley's past a year after the Crusade he participated in

C. Crowley's past immediately before and during the Crusade

All 3 are relatively independent of each other and can be more or less read standalone

Chapter 1 is about **period A** (Mika and Yuu's interaction, Ferid and Crowley's interaction; Ferid asks Crowley to tell about his past and how he became a vampire and Crowley complies)

Chapter 2 is about **period B** (Crowley's story starts: human!Crowley meets Ferid and the events leading to Crowley becoming a vampire are triggered)

Chapter 3 is about **period C** interspaced with insertions from **period B** (the story of how the Crusade began and unfolded for Crowley that Ferid asked him to tell in period B, interspaced with Ferid's comments as he listens to Crowley's story of the Crusade, also in period B)

Intermission is about **period A** (Ferid asks Crowley to put his story on hold as he goes to meet Mika)

CHILLY TERRITORY

 chilly-territory.tumblr.com/post/138283289440/seraph-of-the-end-the-story-of-vampire-michaela

We've agreed that [amethystoria](#) will translate this part of intermission with Mika meeting Ferid for the first time. It follows Ferid and Crowley's talk in the library and Ferid putting their conversation on hold to go meet Mika who is to come to his mansion, as per Sakuma's report in chapter 1. In the meantime, I'll provide a summary of this segment (the volume ends at it)

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela by *Kagami Takaya*

Intermission (closing part SUMMARY) (volume 1, pages 235-247)

It starts with Mika coming to Ferid's mansion. Standing in front of it, he's trembling with fear, because a few children that were regularly coming to Ferid's mansion, went missing, but of course, no vampire would make a fuss just because of a few livestock disappearing. Mika tries to calm himself down, telling himself that he will be alright. So he knocks, and the door opens, inviting him in.

Inside he finds the interior decorum that's so luxurious that he only saw something like it in picture books and fairy tales, and also there are quite a few children there.

A girl comes up to him, asking if he's the newcomer who's supposed to come here today and if he's going to live here starting today. After getting a no, she identifies him as "Ferid-sama's special favorite" and takes him to Ferid.

On the way, Mika sees children playing with many nice toys, and thinks that he would like to bring Yuu-chan and the other Hyakuya orphans here. But not before he confirms that this place is not dangerous in any way.

Mika is taken to the garden where many colorful flowers grow, and this is Mika's first time seeing flowers in this underground city. Ferid is nowhere in sight, but when the girl calls out to him, he emerges from behind one of the flower beds, with blood on his lips. Then a boy gets up from that flower bed with blood trickling down his neck. When the boy sees Mika, he embarrassedly tries to hide the wounds on his neck. Ferid allows him to take anything he wants from the mansion and sends him and the girl off. And that leaves Mika all alone with Ferid.

Mika says that he heard that those who come here will be granted special favors. Yes, if he, Ferid, takes a liking to them, Ferid specifies. Mika is determined to make Ferid like him no matter what, because in this world seemingly without a future beyond being livestock, sooner or later the Hyakuya orphans' hearts are bound to die. Yuu-chan is always saying that he will kick the vampires' butts, and the children believe him for now, but there will come a time when they will realize how impossible that is. Before that happens, Mika is determined to do something and not let despair eat away at their hearts.



So he makes as cheerful a face as he can manage and asks Ferid what he should do to make Ferid like him. Ferid says that he's already starting to like Mika a little, his blue eyes and golden locks in particular. He asks if that color is natural and where Mika was born, to which the answers are yes and Japan, although he's not Japanese. Then Ferid asks his name and Mika gives it. To Ferid's compliment about Mikaela being a nice name, Mika, after remembering his mother's words about him being a chosen one, only for her to push him out of the car a second later, says that

he doesn't like his name.

To that, out of the blue, Ferid remarks that once upon a time, he himself was call "Michaela" by a king of the past. Before Mika can ask what he means, Ferid caresses Mika's neck with a fingernail and says he's going to drink Mika's blood now.

Mika agrees, and Ferid does, which is the first time Mika's blood is drunk by a vampire directly. His sensations are pretty much the same as what Crowley felt in chapter 3 - feeling the life sucked out of him and deriving immoral pleasure from the act. Feeling pleasure when being devoured like livestock is extremely humiliating, and he understands why the boy from earlier was embarrassed.

As Ferid drinks his blood, Mika is quickly losing strength and thinks that he just might be killed like this, dying from blood loss, but Ferid stops, admitting that he almost lost control and killed Mika. Once released from Ferid's hold, Mika drops to the ground and can't get up, as he realizes that he must not bring Yuu-chan and the kids here and make them go through this.

Ferid says that a meal is prepared for him in the dining room and that he should lie down for a bit, then take what he wants and leave for today, and that Ferid hopes he would be coming here again. Ferid vanishes.

Mika takes a toy on his way to the dining hall, and when he's there he finds high quality food in great amounts. Holding back, he decides to eat it with Yuu-chan and the other Hyakuya kids. And also that he will keep his visits to Ferid's mansion secret from Yuu-chan. He wants Yuu-chan to smile and say ridiculous things, not to experience what he just went thought. Mika takes fruits and leaves Ferid's mansion.

When Mika reaches their lodging, he finds Yuu-chan waiting for him with a worried face. The kids are all glad he's back, especially after he shows them the fruits he brought. They all are his first real family he wants to protect. No matter what kind of awful place they are in, they can get though if they're all together. Yuu-chan smiles when he sees some grape and Mika smiles with him, despite being dead tired from the blood loss.

But that's when he got involved in the long, long journey of 2 millennia. Ferid Barthory. Crowley Eusford. The ruin of the world, vampires, angels, demons. And this is where the tale surrounding the cursed name, Michaela, began.



Okay, my last installement for this novel is the afterword by Kagami-sensei. For my part, I gotta say I hadn't expected to enjoy translating this novel quite as much as I did! I wish it was longer. It has humor, mystery, despair, tragedy, irony and so much food for thought! I'm definitely looking forward to volume 2, whenever it will come out (no earlier than summer though, which means a long long wait). Anyway, onto it.

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela by *Kagami Takaya*

Afterword (volume 1, pages 250-251)

Hello, this is Kagami Takaya. I'm not sure whether there are first time readers among you who don't know me yet or not, but since it's my first novel published under Shueisha, I decided to start with a self-introduction regardless. So, I'm in charge of the script for the Owari no Seraph manga, as well as the novels. Before starting on this series, I worked on such series as "Densetsu no Yuusha no Densetsu" ("The Legend of the Legendary Heroes") and "Itsuka Tenma no Kurousagi" ("A Dark Rabbit has Seven Lives"). Both of the aforementioned got anime adaptations, and I would like to thank those of you who know them. And those who haven't read them, do give a try! (lol).

Okay, with this out of the way~ I will now talk about the new series for Owari no Seraph.

Currently, the Owari no Seraph manga takes place in the world as it is after ruin—

In the light novel series "Owari no Seraph: Ichinose Guren, 16sai no Hametsu" ("Seraph of the End: Ichinose Guren, Catastrophe at 16"), published by Kodansha, with Ichinose Guren in his high school years as the protagonist, it is described just how the world fell into ruin (you will see how Guren, Shinya, Kureto, Goshi, Mito, Sayuri, Shigure and Mahiru met in high school, and how they fought the collapse of the world. Ferid also makes an appearance(lol)).

Both the manga and the light novel series are original works (not a manga novelized, or a novel getting a manga adaptation). They are the stories that I started at the same time about what happened before the collapse of the

world and what is going on after it. In short, till today, I have been working on the stories from two different time periods of the Owari no Seraph universe simultaneously! And now, I'm introducing you yet another time period!

It is a tale of the vampire side. And its scale is by far the grandest. I believe that those of you who have finished reading this first novel are already aware that this historical drama with extensive cast is structured in a way that involves every other Owari no Seraph story. Why did vampires come into being? Why did they become the way they are? What is Ferid's story? What is Crowley's? And Krul's? What about Yuu, Mika and Guren? I'm trying to write this tale as an independent one, but if you read not only this one but all the three sources, you will find it a zillion times more fun as secret tricks in each get uncovered! At least this is what is supposed to be the selling point of the series (lol). I have fun writing these stories, so I sincerely hope that you will also have fun reading them. Well then, "The Story of Vampire Michaela" raises its curtain. Ladies and gentlemen, I will be counting on your support from now on.

Kagami Takaya